

Rafsanjani, portrait of the week by Bahgory 8



Ross returns with 'new approach'

AMERICA'S Middle East peace mediator Dennis Ross began a new mission to the region yesterday amid deepening pessimism over his ability to revive the stalled Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.

Ross was scheduled to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last night before heading to Gaza for additional talks with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

The American envoy returned after Israeli President Ezer Weizman secured a pledge from Arafat to restore security co-ordination between the two sides at a meeting on the Israel-Gaza border Tuesday night. No other progress was reported.

Weizman, whose post is largely ceremonial, said after the meeting — only the second high-level Israel-PLO contact in more than seven weeks of deadlock — that Arafat had agreed to meetings between security chiefs on both sides.

"This point was agreed upon. I hope that it will begin operating within a few days," Weizman told reporters.

Palestinians were more circumspect, with Arafat saying only that he and Weizman had "reiterated the importance of preserving security for both our peoples".

A PLO official said Arafat rebuffed a request by Weizman to meet Netanyahu.

Senior PLO negotiator Yasser Abd Rabbo said the meeting had done nothing to resolve the stalemate. He said Arafat would only be held with US officials present. "None of the basic issues were resolved during the meeting... Resumption of negotiations will not take place before full cessation of settlement activities," Abd Rabbo said.

Weizman insisted on restoring co-ordination. We have agreed on meetings at the security level that will be attended by the Americans," he said. The first meeting is expected to be held today between Palestinian and Israeli security chiefs.

Palestinian sources told Al-Ahram Weekly that Ross was likely to urge Israel to freeze building new settlements and refrain from actions that pre-empt final status negotiations. Since the American ideas do not deal directly with halting construction in East Jerusalem, they remain unacceptable to the Palestinian Authority.

"The settlement in Abu Ghneim is the main issue," a Palestinian official said. "Even if the Authority is ready to make concessions it cannot, for the simple reason that what affects the future of Jerusalem cannot be a matter of compromise because it affects the interests of the entire Muslim and Christian worlds."

The Clinton administration does not appear to be ready for prolonged, Camp David style negotiations because it cannot afford to offer solutions to such sensitive issues as Jerusalem, settlements, refugees and borders.

And yet, an administration official said the US role will continue to be active on substantive and procedural issues. "We are ready for an active, interventionist approach," he said.

Ross is expected to visit Cairo on Saturday.

Tarek Hassan
in Gaza;
Hoda Tewfik
in Washington;
Wire dispatches

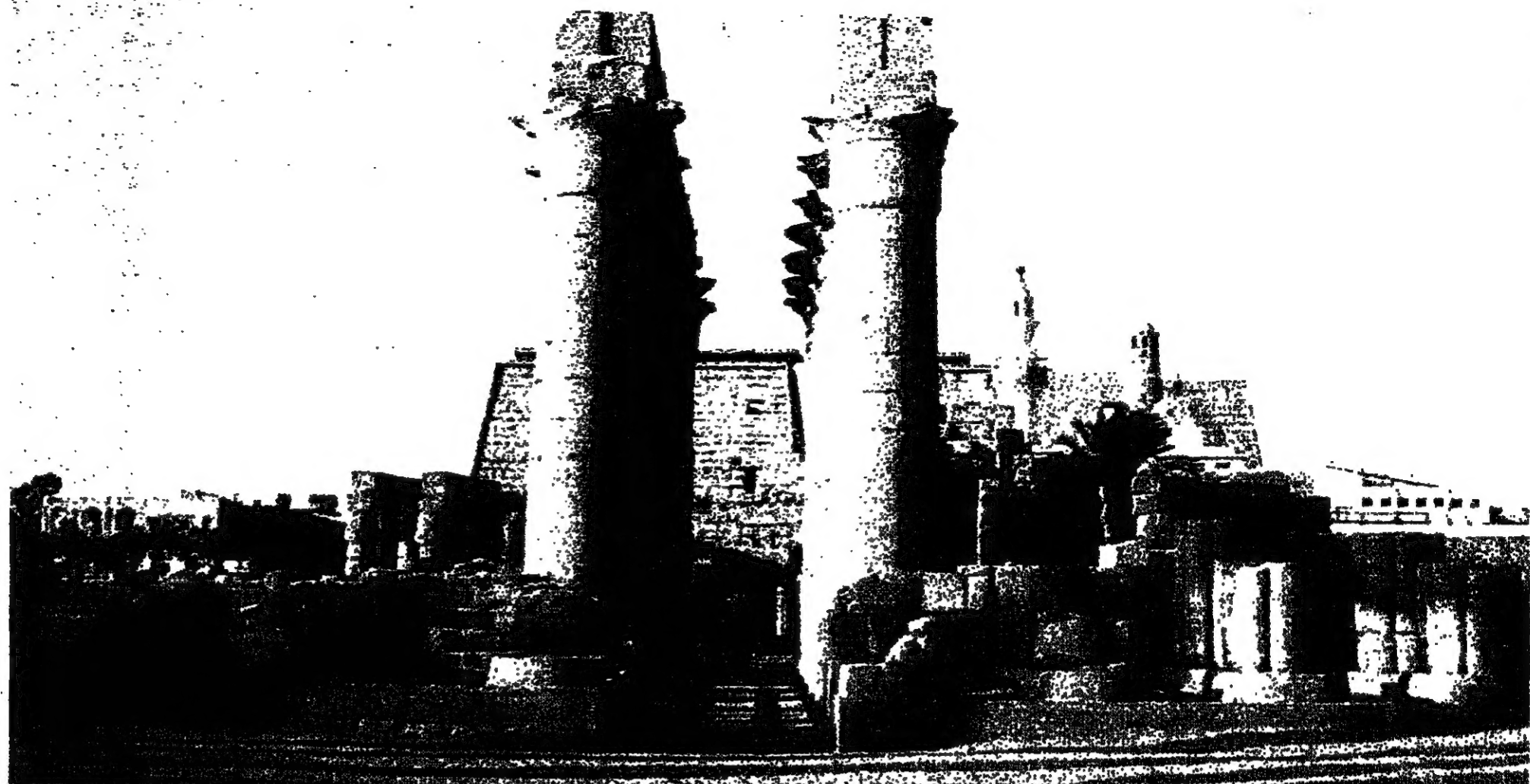


photo: Mohamed El-Din

Amenhotep revisited

The 3,500-year-old Temple of Luxor was swathed in gold and silver light on Tuesday night during a gala festival, attended by President Hosni Mubarak, to mark the end of extensive renovations.

Mubarak, after opening a mummy museum, the first of its kind in the world, attended a concert held in the temple's courtyard of King Amenhotep III, who ruled Egypt from Luxor between 1417 and 1379 BC.

The renovations included dismantling and then re-assembling 22 of the temple's towering columns threatened with collapse by seeping underground water.

"The restoration of these columns and their re-installation repeats exactly what happened thousands of years ago and is like a dream come true," said Culture Minister Farouk Hosni.

Mubarak, accompanied by Mrs Suzanne Mubarak and officials, toured the site before taking their seats in an open-air theatre in front of the temple. With the temple behind them and a cluster of palm trees on either side, six soloists chanted "happy birthday" to the president, an occasion which he celebrated on Sunday.

Conductors Selim Sahab and Mustafa Nagui treated the gathering of about 500 to an hour of musical variety that included the Victory March from Aida and Umm Kalthoum's patriotic ballad, "Egypt Speaks About Herself".

The 50-ton, 12-metre high pillars, with crowns sculpted like papyrus buds, make up a court considered the

In a gala festival, attended by President Mubarak, the newly renovated Temple of Luxor was unveiled to the world. Omayma Abdel-Latif and Nevine Khalil were there



glory of the ancient temple, built on the east bank of the Nile.

Amenhotep, known as a great builder and hunter under whose reign the empire reached its zenith, built the court "for Amoun-Ra, king of the gods, of fine white sandstone, made very high and wide", according to the ancient building inscription. A majestic avenue of sphinxes leads to the temple, which was also once flanked by two red granite obelisks, one of which now stands in the Place de la Concorde in Paris.

Hosni described the restoration of the columns, at a cost of LE9 million, as a "historic achievement". The idea was first floated in 1987 when a serious slanting of the columns, caused by water seepage, was observed by antiquities officials. Salt crystals appeared on the walls, causing some inscriptions to disappear.

"The reconstruction of these columns is the result of

concerted efforts, carried out for the first time by Egyptian restorers, archaeologists and experts. This is a 100 per cent Egyptian project," Hosni told Al-Ahram Weekly.

Mohamed El-Saghir, in charge of the antiquities of Upper Egypt, said the columns were restored "with sandstone from El-Selsela mountain, the same place from which the ancient Egyptians quarried."

The level of underground water was reduced and the ground reinforced with sandstone to guarantee that no leakage would occur in the future. At the same time the temple's first lighting system was installed.

And yet the scheme came under fire from some archaeologists, with one describing the process of dismantling and restoration as nothing more than a "cloning" of Amenhotep.

"It is not going to be as it was," said one ar-

chaeologist, who asked that his name be withheld. "It is not easy to dismantle these huge columns and then put them back together without damaging them."

Brushing aside this argument, Hosni insisted that "the columns have been restored to their original beauty. The whole process is meant to consolidate them against the wear and tear of time and environmental factors."

In addition to the renovated temple, the site now boasts a new mummy museum, devoted to explaining the ancient Egyptian practice of mummification. Displayed inside are the mummies of humans and animals as well as five beautifully painted sarcophagi. Paintings on the walls provide a full description of the various stages of mummification and among the objects on display are the mummies of a fish found in Esna, a newly-born crocodile, a goose and the leg of a goat wrapped in linen.

"Mummification is the most sacred process practised by the ancient Egyptians and tourists are curious to know the mystery behind it. This museum is meant to reveal some of the secrets of mummification," Nasri Iskandar, who supervised work at the museum, told the Weekly. The museum was built at a cost of LE2 million.

Tourists will also have easier access to the Nile's West Bank — home to the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens — after Monday's inauguration by Mubarak of a new bridge linking the two banks of the river. (see p.2)

Money talks

The unprecedented expansion by American Express of its operations in Egypt reflects growing confidence in the country's economic prospects. Aziza Sami reports



John Ward, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive of the American Express Bank, announced this week that the bank plans to consolidate its presence in Egypt, expanding activities in several directions.

Ward, who was speaking at a press conference hosted by Al-Ahram at its downtown Cairo offices on Monday, said the decision reflects the success of Egypt's economic reforms, and is intended to allow the bank to capitalise on positive projected growth rates in the coming decade. The bank will bring in financial teams from its parent organisation, the American Express Company, to alert key experts worldwide of Egypt's potential.

Ward met with Prime Minister Kamal El-Ghazali earlier this week to discuss ways of promoting investment in Egypt. "There are plans for the American Express Company, of which the bank is a subsidiary, to bring operations to Egypt," he said. "I am talking here of the full power of the American Express Company to support the activities of the bank." The bank's parent company offers broad-based financial services and manages assets of \$150 billion.

"We have more investments capitalised at LE100 million in Egypt than in any other country," noted Ward.

Financial teams have already been set up in Singapore and Western Europe to help in financing trade. East Asian investors seeking new outlets will be alerted to investment potentials in Egypt which can become a major production base for goods destined for other Middle Eastern and African countries. "The Egyptian economy, for instance, complements Israel's. They

have very high-tech production but they need to import things which they once used to produce. These can be produced in Egypt at a lower price," Ward told Al-Ahram Weekly.

The bank also intends to bring investment opportunities in Southeast Asia, Latin America and the US to Egyptian investors who might want to diversify their portfolios, though Ward admitted that "this [move] would be for the affluent rather than the broad-based market". The bank is also seeking to expand activities in derivatives, loan syndication and asset sales "as well as helping syndicate confirmations of credit sellers in order to increase our capacity to serve customers".

These steps, Ward believes, will stimulate capital activity in Egypt and will lead to "a very successful brokerage operation".

Expanding operations in Egypt has been on the cards for some time, with the final decision to go ahead being influenced by the bank's already strong position in the country.

"The spectacular success," as Ward describes it, of last year's international public offering was one reason American Express was expanding its operations.

"When we planned the initial fund, we never dreamed 57,000 people would show up. The initial offering was an LE100 million fund, but the total offers amounted to LE900 million. Of the 57,000 individuals, only 2,000 of our own customers showed up. "This is a tremendous expression of the desire here in Egypt to invest in the free market system. The fact that so much capital could be raised in the market was

very exciting."

Along with these planned expansions in operations, the bank also intends to participate in the funding of projects in the New Valley and Tushki. "We will basically team up with a number of banks, in this case. While we have a role here, we cannot provide the size of financing required for these projects," he said.

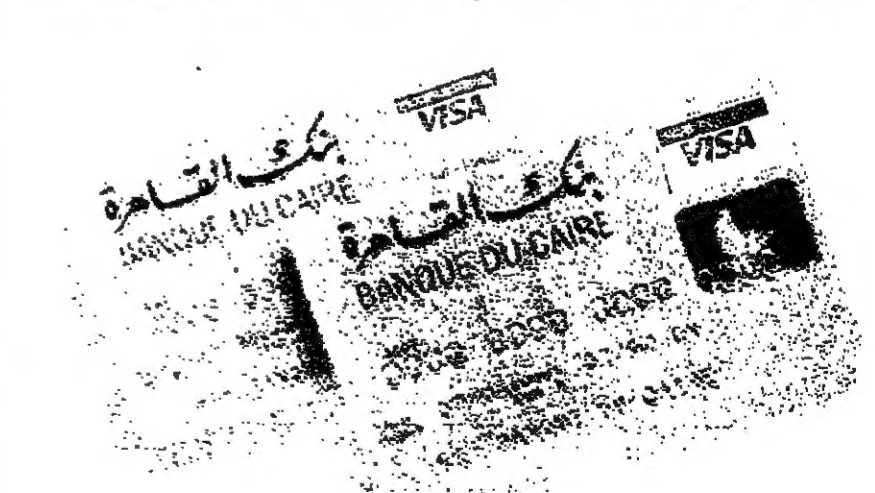
The bank's decision to implement these steps reflects its confidence in on-going economic reforms in Egypt. The Egyptian economy, according to Ward, is "very well prepared for the latter part of this decade, and the first part of the next, to witness very high economic growth."

The fact that "the rating agencies, which are critical in rating foreign debt, have put Egypt in the investment grade will now allow it to raise money at very cheap rates in comparison with the past," noted Ward. "Inflation has come down dramatically, as well as the budget deficit. In fact, the reserve position, which totals \$19 billion in foreign currency, is very strong. Egypt now has 16 months of imports, which at one point was only six months."

These figures are telling, given that the process of reform in Egypt was more difficult than for other countries with a solid history of private sector operations. Given that "there were many state-owned enterprises...the country's privatisation process has been of great importance."

Ward believes that "the economy has made some impressive strides on the road to reform over the past 10 years", adding that "some countries just don't have the ability to make this change".

BANQUE DU CAIRE VISA CARD
Mobile Bank Dealing in All Currencies



With Banque du Caire Visa Card, no need to carry much cash anymore!

It enables you to obtain ready money through the Bank's local and international branches and through the cash dispensers network all over the world all day long.

Grants you the benefit of obtaining the Global Card for international phone calls free of charge.

Banque Du Caire Visa Card is accepted by more than 5000 firms in Egypt including hotels, restaurants and companies, etc, as well as by 11 million firms worldwide.

You can use Banque Du Caire Visa Card in monetary draws and purchases in all currencies and pay in Egyptian pound. With your photo and signature on the card, you'll make sure no one else can benefit from your visa. Interest free 45 day term of payment for draws & purchases.



Your Reliable Consultant

INSIDE

Edward Said:
Toward total
appropriation

Amin Hewedy:
A matter of
determination

Cairo-
Tehran
ties thaw

Philosopher
faces
apostasy
charge





Obituary

Saheir El-Qalamawi: A pioneer of women's rights

Dr Saheir El-Qalamawi, a professor of Arabic literature and champion of women's right to education, died on Sunday at the age of 84. She had spent the last months of her life in hospital, suffering from age-related diseases.

Born to enlightened parents, El-Qalamawi graduated from the American College for Girls at the age of 17. She wanted to study medicine but, to her surprise and chagrin, found that women were not admitted to the Faculty of Medicine.

She tried to persuade her parents to send her abroad but to no avail. But she was resolute in her determination to pursue her education. This resolve, she once remarked, "is part of my character. I always fought and struggled for what is right and I never gave in."

Although not a feminist in the usual sense, El-Qalamawi played an important role in asserting the right of women to pursue higher studies. Having been refused admission to the Faculty of Medicine, she turned to the Faculty of Arts, and it was thanks to Dr Taha Hussein, dean of the faculty at the time, that she was allowed to enrol. Although she was a graduate of an American school, she nevertheless chose the Arabic section, showing great enthusiasm for Arabic language and literature. El-Qalamawi completed her university studies in 1933, becoming the first woman graduate of the Arabic section. She continued to pioneer her way in academia, becoming a graduate assistant in 1937 and, on obtaining her PhD in 1941, a lecturer in Arabic.

The subject of her doctoral thesis was *The Thousand and One Nights*. It was her interest in this book which added yet another dimension to her academic activities, namely children's culture. *The Thousand and One Nights*, with its rich imaginative streak and diverse adventures, has become a source of inspiration for many children's writers. When Sarwat Okasha, then minister of culture, established the Advisory Bureau for Children's Culture in 1967, El-Qalamawi was chosen as a member of its board.

In the same year, Okasha appointed her as chairwoman of the General Egyptian Book Organisation. The organisation flourished during her tenure, particularly in its production of children's books. In one year, she produced a package of 100 books, beautifully illustrated, in cooperation with a leading Italian firm. When, in 1968, the Supreme Council for Children's Culture was established, she was its first head.

El-Qalamawi was also an Afro-Asian activist and a delegate to many of the conferences of that movement. When the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation came into being in 1957, it led to the formation of two important offshoots, representing the interests of Afro-Asian Writers and Afro-Asian women. El-Qalamawi was involved in both.

In her personal life, she was opposed to traditional ideas about women. In the same way that she challenged prejudices against women's acquisition of knowledge, she likewise rebelled against the concept of arranged marriage.

But the grip of convention was strong enough to prevent her marrying without parental permission. As a PhD student in London, she met fellow student Yehia El-Khasab, also preparing his PhD. They fell in love, but waited until their return to Cairo to be married.

Amid her academic career and involvement in diverse activities, El-Qalamawi found the time to produce 12 books of scholarly writing and criticism. Her best known is the autobiographical *Tales of My Grandmother*, which has been translated into English. In this book, she underlined the folkloric role of grandparents in preserving love of the country.

El-Qalamawi rejected the idea that, in literature, there is a separate "women's literature." She once said: "I simply refuse to accept the existence of so-called women's literature. There is simply good and bad writing. Women are an integral part of society. Their problems are interwoven into the social, political and economic fabric of society."

Like her mentor, Taha Hussein, El-Qalamawi was a believer in the internationality of culture. Having studied European, particularly English, literature, she embraced comparative studies as a field of research for her post-graduate students. One of them was Jihan El-Sadat, wife of the late President Anwar El-Sadat.

Mursi Saad El-Din

CLASS ADS

FOR RENT
EMBASSY NEEDS SECRETARY.
SPOKEN AND WRITTEN SPANISH, ENGLISH
AND ARABIC; COMPUTER KNOWLEDGE.
TEL. 3415137-3403589
9:00 TO 13:00

FOR RENT
Lux apt in Zamalek, 3 bed, 2.5 bath A/C,
satellite dish, garage.
Call: 5753286 - 012 2115538

Bridge to the Valley of the Kings

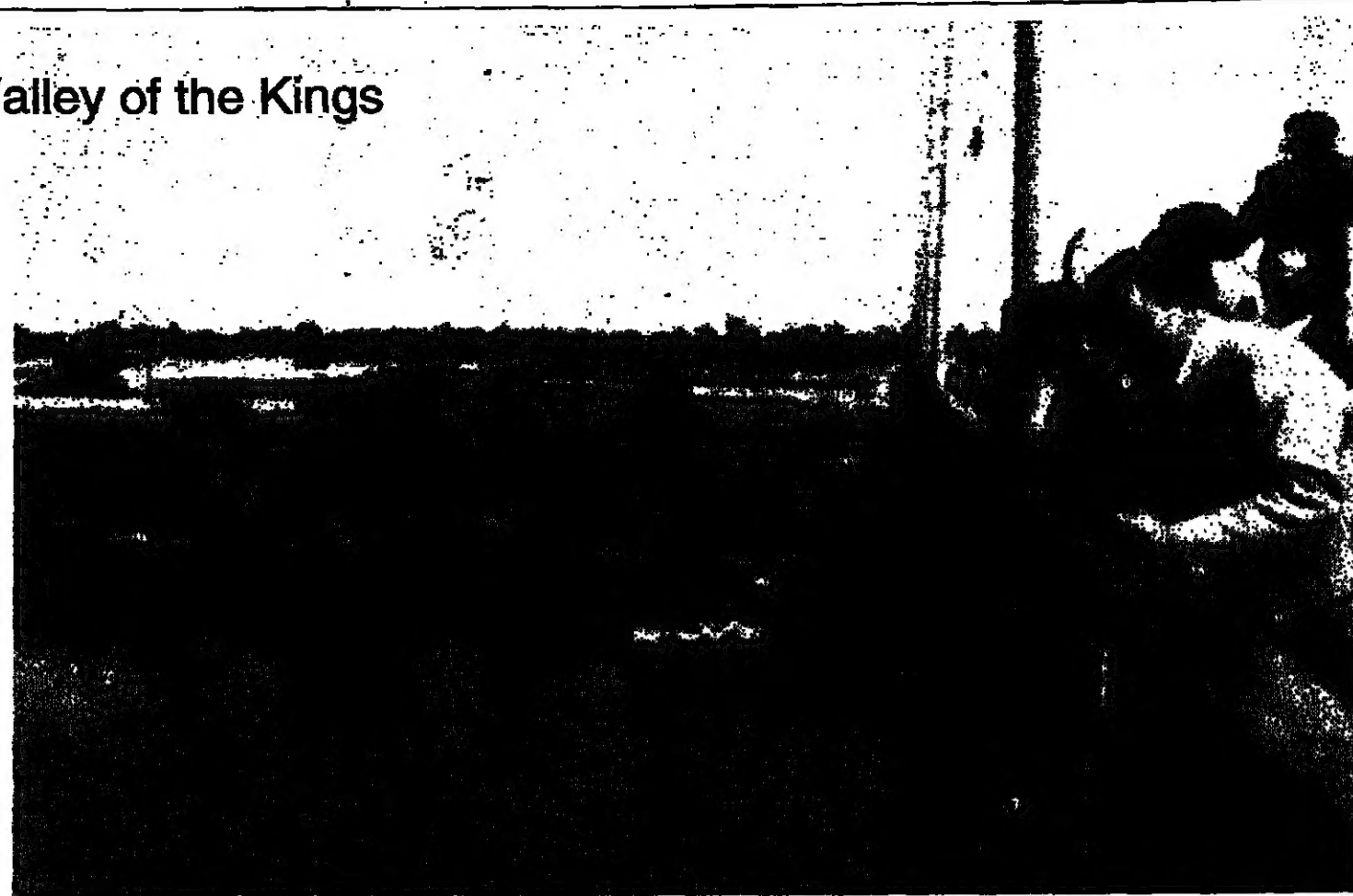
PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak inaugurated on Tuesday the 5.2-km-long Luxor bridge, connecting the main road east of the Nile with the west bank home to the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens — the nation's largest Pharaonic necropolis. Mubarak arrived in Luxor from Aswan in the early afternoon, under a scorching sun and temperatures estimated at 41C.

Joined by a large entourage, the President listened to a 15-minute briefing by Transport Minister Suleiman Metwalli, that covered the Luxor bridge as well as seven other bridges the ministry is constructing across the nation. In addition to providing pedestrians and motorists with a picturesque promenade across the Nile, the LE35 million-bridge will also be used in transporting the sugar-cane crop of about 40,000 faddans to sugar plants at Armant on the western bank.

The railings of the bridge are adorned with gold-coloured lotus flowers, set in the black bars. At each end of the bridge, two solemn statues of the god Horus, the protector against evil, stand in front of grey obelisks.

After the opening ceremony, Mubarak, accompanied by Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri, Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif, Minister of Energy Maher Abaza, and Minister of Housing Mohamed Ibrahim Suleiman, took a short brisk walk on the bridge, stopping at times to wave to curious onlookers.

The construction of the bridge had triggered a controversy in the past, with some archaeologists expressing concern that it would introduce heavy traffic in the vicinity of the world her-



itage site on the western bank, thus exposing antiquities to traffic pollutants. There were also fears that the bridge might encourage the inhabitants of the area to construct housing haphazardly, which would have adverse effects on the site.

At the time, Mubarak ordered the establishment of a committee which came to the conclusion that the bridge be completed, provided strict measures are taken to conserve the archaeological site.

Culture Minister Farouk Hosni declared the area extending from the bridge to the antiquity site an archaeological preserve, falling under the antiquities protection law.

A joint committee of experts from the Supreme Council of Antiquities, the Supreme Luxor Council and planning and tourism experts was set up to keep a close watch on any activity in the area.

Reported from Luxor by Nevine Khalil and Omayma Abdel-Latif

A thaw in Cairo-Tehran relations

An 18-year break in Egyptian-Iranian diplomatic relations was interrupted this week by a visit from Ali Akbar Velayati, Iran's foreign minister, to Cairo.



Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati met with President Hosni Mubarak on Tuesday to convey an invitation from President Hashemi Rafsanjani to a summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) scheduled for December in Tehran.

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said Mubarak had accepted the invitation but, in an indication the president may not attend personally, Moussa said that "circumstances may change" by December. In that case, Egypt would be represented by the foreign minister.

Velayati described his talks with both Mubarak and Moussa as "very frank," "successful" and "very friendly."

"We do believe that cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Egypt should be constructive," Velayati said following a lengthy session with Moussa on Monday night.

The talks between the Iranian official and the Egyptian side dealt with the proposed agenda of the OIC summit, which includes Jerusalem, Afghanistan and the conditions of Muslims in Central Asia.

"Egypt and Iran are influential member-states of the OIC. Their cooperation could certainly benefit this organisation," said Mohamed Ezzeddin, assistant to the foreign minister for OIC affairs.

But Velayati's visit, diplomats from both sides agreed, is not just about conveying an invitation to a summit. According to one Egyptian diplomat, "This visit has more to do with discussing the future of relations between the two countries."

Sources believe that the time is ripe for warmer bilateral relations. "Iran is facing threats of a US military strike, while Cairo is facing US attempts to politically marginalise it in the region. If the two come together, the US would have to reconsider its policies," one source said.

Moussa said that the areas of difference between Cairo and Tehran were discussed during the talks but the delegations did not go into too many details. According to a source close to the Iranian delegation, who asked that his name be withheld, "Velayati is here in a show of good faith. He will listen to what the Egyptians have to say, but he won't go down on his knees for them to resume full diplomatic relations."

Iran broke off diplomatic relations with Egypt after it signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979. Relations worsened when Egypt provided shelter to the overthrown Shah and took Iraq's side in its 1980-1988 war with Iran. Egypt also accused Iran of providing support to anti-government militants based in Sudan.

At present, the two main areas of difference between the two countries concern Gulf security and what Egypt views as Iran's attempt to export the ideology of its Islamic revolution to the Arab states.

"Iran wants to dominate security measures in the Gulf and this is something that Cairo does not go along with," an informed source said. "For one thing, this dominance is a matter of concern to the Arab Gulf states, to which Egypt is bound by strong ties, and for another, it would undermine Egypt's role as the influential country in the region."

The source also noted that the Islamic regime in Sudan, which has Iranian backing, "has been giving Cairo headaches."

During the Cairo visit, Velayati denied any link between his government and the Egyptian militant groups.

Iran, on the other hand, has long criticised Cairo's close relations with Washington and its peace policies with Israel.

But sources from both sides conceded that, despite the various disagreements between Cairo and Tehran, there are factors that could bring the two nations together. As one diplomatic source suggested, "Neither country likes the fact that the oil-rich

Arab Gulf states depend on the West for territorial security. They also believe that a rapprochement between the two nations would prompt Washington to adopt a less anti-Arab attitude in the peace process."

Since 1991, the two countries have kept "interest sections" in each other's capitals. "Cairo and Tehran could also have very productive economic relations that could give a boost to the economies of the two states," commented Mahmoud Farag, head of the Iranian department at the Foreign Ministry. Rough estimates suggest that full economic ties between the two states could be worth \$5 billion a year.

According to Farag, Cairo could help open up the African market to Tehran which could reciprocate by helping Egypt find better ways into the Asian market.

Relations between Cairo and Tehran "have experienced an upturn over the last five years due to their cooperation on the Islamic scene, and the continuation of contacts will allow the atmosphere between the two countries to be cleared up," Velayati said.

Speaking at a meeting with Cairo University professors on Tuesday, Velayati asserted that his country was keen on boosting its relations with Cairo in all fields. He particularly stressed the importance of increasing cultural and scientific exchange.

Moussa has said, on more than one occasion recently, that the tension between Egypt and Iran should not become permanent. On Tuesday, after the Mousa-Velayati meeting, Moussa said the Egyptian-Iranian talks had produced "good results" that would open the way for a resumption of full diplomatic relations.

Egypt acts to salvage peace process

Continuing efforts to salvage the faltering peace process, Cairo played host to the Syrian and Palestinian presidents and a special European envoy. Dina Ezzat and Nevine Khalil watched the diplomatic scene

Cairo intensified its efforts this week to break the stalemate in the Middle East peace process, with President Hosni Mubarak meeting with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad last Thursday and with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Monday. Foreign Minister Amr Moussa also held talks with Miguel Moratinos, the special envoy of the European Union.

Mubarak and Assad, who met at the Aqaba Gulf resort of Sharm El-Sheikh, appeared pessimistic about the prospects of reviving the stalled peace effort. Assad told a joint news conference that the policies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "indicate that the doors to peace are closed."

Mubarak expressed the hope that Israel would take action to give a push to the peace process "before it is laid to rest."

Assad, confirming Syria's commitment to peace, said: "We want this peace, but I can tell you now that the road is long."

Mubarak and Assad agreed that an Arab summit was unnecessary for the time being, indicating that the resolutions of last June's Cairo summit were still valid. "There is no need to hold a new Arab summit until we reach a dead end, which would require new decisions," Mubarak said.

He added that consultations were continuing with the United States, but a formula had not been reached yet because of "difficulties between the US and Israel."

Mubarak said more time was needed and that Israel should understand that "peace, stability and cooperation have a price, which is the return of all [Arab] lands."

Assad stressed the need for a European initiative, declaring that "Europe can play a big role" in reactivating the peace process.

Mubarak and Arafat met in Cairo on Monday ahead of Tuesday's meeting be-

tween the Palestinian leader and Israeli President Ezer Weizman at the Erez crossing-point in the Gaza Strip and the return of America's special envoy, Dennis Ross, to the region.

After talks on Sunday night between Arafat and Moussa, the Palestinians expressed doubts that Ross would carry fresh ideas for breaking the deadlock that would be acceptable to them.

"Ross came to the region [several times] and said that he would listen [to the Palestinians and Israelis] and report back to Mr Clinton. Now we hope that he will have something to say," said top Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat. In his view, Ross should have one target in mind: "to rescue the Arabs from the mud through which Netanyahu has been dragging them."

Moratinos, fresh from talks with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy in Jerusalem, meeting with Moussa on Monday, "I am here to share with the Egyptians our ideas on how to get rid of the deadlock and get the Palestinian track moving," the European envoy said.

The ideas he brought to Cairo included the halt of Jewish construction in Arab East Jerusalem in return for stepped-up Palestinian-Israeli security cooperation and a bilateral agreement to advance the final-status negotiations.

Israel has shown little sympathy with the European initiative, opting, instead, to work with Ross. According to diplomats, the Europeans are currently revising their initiative, trying to make it more palatable to Israel while still meeting the minimum Palestinian demands.

The Palestinians say they would accept an initiative that includes "a response to unilateral Israeli decisions, the confiscation of land, the expansion of settlements, the building of Israeli roads around the Pal-

estian territories and the pre-empting of the final status talks."

The issue has to be dealt with in its entirety," Arafat said, following the talks with Moussa.

A few days earlier, there were reports that Arafat might agree to go back to the negotiating table, even if Israel did not stop construction in East Jerusalem, provided Israel gave the green light for building a Palestinian harbour and airport in Gaza and stopped the systematic confiscation of identity cards from the Arab inhabitants of East Jerusalem.

"You cannot have peace and settlements at the same time," said Moussa. "The settlement policy destroys negotiations and contradicts the spirit of negotiations."

Moussa and Moratinos said they were looking forward to hearing what Ross had to say. "We hope he will bring ideas similar to the ideas we defend," said the EU envoy. He also expressed hope that "some openings could be made and some ideas could be accepted" as a result of the Arafat-Weizman meeting.

Moratinos pledged that the Europeans would continue working "24 hours a day" to revive the peace process. He sounded confident that the European initiative would serve as the basis of a solution.

"The European ideas were proposed first and these are the ideas that, in fact, have a general consensus," Moratinos said, nevertheless conceding that some parties still needed to be convinced.

Egyptian diplomats said Cairo was pushing hard for the European initiative because it meets the basics of the Arab demands.

Moussa denied reports that Egypt and Syria had disagreed on the need for an Arab summit. "There are no differences. When there is a need for a summit, it will take place," he said.

Azam faces fresh charge

Alleged Israeli spy Azam Azam now technically faces the death penalty after a new charge was levelled against him by prosecution authorities. Khaled Dawoud reports

Azam Azam, an Arab-Israeli standing trial on charges of spying, has been served a new accusation by the State Security Prosecutor which, legal sources said, technically carries the death penalty. But the sources said a death sentence was unlikely because Azam is not charged with gathering military information.

Azam, along with an Egyptian and two Israeli women, was charged with "criminal complicity for communicating [with a foreign country] with the intention of harming Egypt's national interests."

Originally, Azam was accused of providing assistance to the first defendant in the case, Emad Ismail, an Egyptian. According to Azam's lawyer, Farid El-Dib, this charge is punishable by a maximum 15 years imprisonment. The "assistance" took the form of providing him with female underwear which, prosecutors said, produced a secret ink when soaked in water. The ink could be used in writing letters to the Israeli intelligence, Mossad.

Azam allegedly took the underwear from two Israeli women, also of Druze origin, who work for the Mossad. The two, Zahra Youssef Greiss and Mona Ahmed Shabaneh, are outside Egypt and face trial in absentia.

Azam was also accused last Monday of taking part with Greiss and Shabaneh in offering money to Ismail to lure him to work for the Israeli intelligence. Azam was "informed of the new charge at the Tora Prison, south of Cairo, official sources said."

According to prosecutors, the information which Ismail was allegedly paid for was related to Egypt's new industrial cities and the economic activities taking place there. Thus, the case could be treated as one of economic espionage.

The trial of Azam, Ismail and the two Israeli women opened on 24 April and was quickly adjourned to 18 May because Ismail's lawyer, Ahmed Bakr, failed to show up. He told reporters that he meant to arrive late in order to get the court to adjourn hearings and thus allow him time to study the case and prepare his defence.

In the opening hearings, both Azam and Ismail denied the charges, insisting that they were innocent. The lawyers of the two defendants claimed the evidence against their clients was flimsy and expressed confidence that they would be acquitted.

Erbakan feels the squeeze

The fortunes of Turkey's first Islamist premier have not been helped by rumours of a coalition break-up. As **Omayma Abdel-Latif** reports, the trouble has given ammunition to the Refah Party's growing list of enemies

As Turkey emerges from yet another power conflict which severely jolted the country's political scene last week, it is still mired in a political struggle that shows no sign of resolution.

While Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan is working hard to avoid another possible showdown with the army generals, vowing to put into effect the National Security Council (MKG) recommendations on curbing the Islamic influence inside his party, many still believe that the days of his government are numbered. Though Erbakan had agreed last February to measures which included the closure of hundreds of Islamic schools, putting limits on religious dress and tighter control on Islamic charity foundations, he was dragging his feet on implementation, which prompted the military command to send warning signals to Turkey's first Islamic premier.

Despite the fact that a coalition break-up was averted, the crisis, according to observers, has left scars on the Refah Party ranks who show signs of simmering discontent as one of the MKG meeting's resolutions is to put Turkey's first Islamist premier and his party under the careful watch of the army generals. Turkish politics, according to Sirna Evcan, a veteran political analyst, have reached a point of no-return as the major-

ity of Turks are "convinced that something should be done to avert the danger, but are forced to wait for the Turkish Armed Forces to guide the way."

A poll conducted last week by the English-language *Turkish Daily News* revealed stunning results. An overwhelming majority of Turks do not believe the military could administer the country any better than the civilians. The poll also showed that 72.3 per cent of the participants think that the present coalition government should be terminated and early elections called. Some voiced concern over the coming government. "Are those who will replace this government cleaners?" one pollster asked.

Some political observers lay the blame of the deteriorating political situation in Turkey on the "media and the forces which subjected the Refah Party members to incredible provocations." For example, recently, Commander General Osman Ozbek insulted Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, the Refah Party and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd at a private meeting in Artvin. The video of his remarks was televised over and over again creating yet another uproar.

"The tone of the insults against the party are getting harsher and harsher every passing day," a Refah source told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "The mass circulation newspapers are twisting the facts to a degree where the rights and wrongs become irrelevant," the source claimed. "For example, recently, Commander General Osman Ozbek insulted Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, the Refah Party and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd at a private meeting in Artvin. The video of his remarks was televised over and over again creating yet another uproar."

The recent crisis has created strong undercurrents of resentment inside the Refah Party toward its participation in the coalition. For the first time, the issue of the RP withdrawing from the coalition has been raised among party members. Some strongly believe that the RP should quit to save the party's credibility as it is tarnished by Erbakan's continued concessions to the military and his secular partner. Meanwhile, the "modernist wing" of the party

represented by State Minister Abdullah Gul argues that an election should be held without delay so as not to jeopardise the democratic regime.

Erbakan is faced with defections from his coalition partners. Two cabinet ministers from the True Path Party resigned after party leader Tansu Ciller refused to abandon her alliance with Weizmann. He is likely to be faced with more defections, but this time from his own party.

The team of Aydin Menderes, son of former President Ednan Menderes and Erbakan's deputy, according to news reports, is still pushing with determination for the RP to withdraw from the government. Menderes believes that there is a "strong risk that democracy will be interrupted." In order to force the RP to withdraw from the government, Menderes and six of his friends have decided to announce to the press sometime next week their decision to resign from the RP, thereby dealing a further blow to Prime Minister Erbakan.

RP Secretary-General Oguzhan Asilturk, who represents the party's conservative wing, opposed withdrawal. He maintained that rather than adopting a stance which would make the party seem to have failed, RP members should remain in government and wait until the government is brought down by a censure motion or until the RP's partner ends the coalition.

But on its 300th day, the coalition government led by Erbakan seems to be trying to find an excuse to break itself up. The fact that no alternative government is in sight adds to the confusion. According to the constitution, if no new government is formed within 45 days, the president may dissolve the government and order a general election in 90 days. In such a case, a three-month interim government would be formed by the president in order to stage elections.

In fact, President Suleiman Demirel himself has publicly called for early elections several times. This was described by analysts as a civil coup against Refah that would keep Turkey's democracy unscathed. "Many of the anti-Refah supporters believe that the ten-month-old election in power has weakened the Refah Party and its credibility and made it lose its voter base," said Evcan. According to him, the trouble with the RP is

that its concept of government begins and ends with keeping power.

Turkey's top military commanders, on the other hand, have ruled out any possibility of a military intervention. Chief of General Staff General Ismail Hakkî Karadayi denied the military coup allegations by saying that the Turkish Armed Forces are out of domestic politics. "No one should pull the military into internal political disputes," he told a news conference. He warned, however, that no one would remain silent about what he described as "some sensitive developments happening in Turkey which create disturbance in the public as well as in the Turkish military." He added, "Those who want a totalitarian Islamic state should be monitored and obstructed without discrimination."

While some observers paint a bleak scenario of the future in Turkey, others believe that a "national consensus government" formed within the existing parliament, which in due course will take the country to elections, is the only solution compatible with democracy. "A military intervention to oust the Refah from power is not what many political observers wish to see as a settlement to the current power conflict."

People may well be frustrated with the democratic process, yet they have to be aware that the pro-Islamic Weizmann Party did not come to power on its own. It capitalised on the mistakes of other mainstream parties," Umar Cevik, Turkey's top commentator, wrote on the recent crisis. He believes that since the democratic process has brought the Refah to power, if the party makes mistakes, then the same process — the democratic process — will eliminate it in the appropriate manner. "If we try to remove Refah from power through clandestine methods, we are bound to create a more complicated situation which may well be hard for anyone to handle, and that includes the military," Cevik added.

"The picture in Turkey is one of desperation and anger," one commentator told the *Weekly*. Those who are running the country, those who want to run it and those who would power should, as the observer puts it, do some soul searching to find a solution to the current bleak situation. "That means a change in the system but how soon will this change come about?"

Threatening manoeuvres

SEVERAL Arab capitals have expressed their deep concern over the increasing military ties between Turkey and Israel and argue that such close links could undermine security in the region, reports Dina Ezzat.

Recent reports on newly scheduled joint military manoeuvres in the Mediterranean between Turkey, Israel and the United States have drawn much criticism in the Arab world. This week, Esam Abdel-Meguid, secretary general of the Arab League, said that Turkey needs to take into consideration the impact of such a move on its Arab neighbours.

"There are so many questions that would have to be answered in this respect," said Amir Moussa, Egyptian minister of Foreign Affairs. If this exercise is meant as a message "of certain commitments" to the Arabs, Moussa added, then it would certainly be a cause for concern.

The minister asserted that if these manoeuvres really take place the concerned Arab parties will have to react. He added that this matter has been discussed and will be further considered by the concerned parties.

The reported impending manoeuvres are supposed to be the culmination of the growing ties between Turkey and Israel launched last year with the signing of a pact for military cooperation that was subject to a strong wave of criticism from the Arab world.

News about the planned manoeuvres re-surfaced after the Turkish minister of defence visited the occupied Golan Heights while on a visit to Israel.

Syria criticised the tripartite agreement between Ankara, Tel Aviv and Washington as a threat to the stability of the region in general and the security of Iran and Syria in particular.

Al-Bath, a leading Syrian newspaper, has argued that the closeness between Turkey and Israel can only encourage Israel to pursue the expansionist policies that are threatening peace in the Middle East.

News of the tripartite manoeuvres came amid Syrian reports that Israel is making covert military threats against Damascus.

Egypt has repeatedly affirmed that military actions against any Arab state can only destroy the peace process.

Turkish President Suleiman Demirel was supposed to visit Cairo last month for talks on this matter, but, so far, that visit has not been officially scheduled. Earlier this week Moussa said that Cairo "would welcome" President Demirel.

Save the Children

Save the Children (SC) is a non-profit development organization implementing programs in Egypt. Among other projects SC is currently implementing two education projects. Currently SC foresees the possibility of a large-scale project which will play a key role in developing Egypt's education sector especially as it relates to girls education. The executing agency will be responsible for the following three activities:

1. Mobilising and strengthening community involvement in support of girls education through NGO interventions
2. Increasing the capacity of the appropriate government and non-governmental institutions to support such community based education efforts; and
3. Developing a system for enhancing the dialogue and linkages among all engaged stakeholders.

Job Description

The project foresees a need for a COMMUNITY EDUCATION ADVISOR (CEA) based in Cairo who will serve as one of the senior technical leaders of this project.

The CEA will be responsible for the following:

- Contributing to the overall technical leadership and staff guidance, including staff training and development, for the national girls' education project.
- Coordinating and acting as principal advisor for the community education component of the project.
- Providing technical guidance to the project for small school development, training of community education committees (CECs), complementary activities in early childhood development, literacy and income generation.
- Participating in the design and implementation of all project training activities. (These activities will be based on a needs assessment carried out with communities and partnering institutions, and will focus specifically on capacity building of CECs).
- Coordinating implementation, budgeting and reporting on all project training activities.
- Coordinating monitoring and evaluation of project training activities; and
- Participating in planning and implementation meetings as part of the project team.

Education and Experience

Qualifications and characteristics of a Community Education Advisor include:

- A Master's degree in education or related social service;
- A minimum of ten years proven experience in adult education and training, including PRA and institutional strengthening of community organizations;
- Significant experience in capacity building or community development in developing countries;
- Strong analytical, interpersonal, and listening skills;
- Experience supervising and training staff;
- A clear understanding of available community resources and how to mobilize them;
- Persuasive negotiating and representational skills;
- Confidence in communities capacities;
- Ability to work in difficult circumstances; and
- Fluency in spoken and written Arabic and English

Job Description

The project foresees a need for three PROJECT SITE MANAGERS and one URBAN COORDINATOR. Located in each of three governorates and Cairo, the Project Site Manager (PSM) will be responsible for supporting the overall coordination of the project at the governorate level. Major job responsibilities include:

- Providing overall technical leadership and staff guidance, including staff training and development;
- Planning and design of the project implementation strategy in the governorate area;
- Coordinating the monitoring and evaluation components of the project at the governorate level;
- Day to day administrative and financial tasks involved in project implementation;
- Building and maintaining effective working relationships with other members of the project team, implementation partners that include the Ministry of Education (ME) at the governorate and district levels, USAID and other engaged stakeholders;
- Annual planning and monthly monitoring;
- Participating in annual budget planning process;
- Ensuring proper targeting of resources and preparing appropriate project reports; and
- Advising the development of program materials, including manuals and tools (including training curricula for community organizations who will be working directly with communities and working with communities through NGOs and technical support staff for classroom facilitators).

Education and Experience

Qualifications and characteristics of a Project Site Manager include:

- A degree in education or related social science;
- Significant experience in capacity building or community development in developing countries, especially in Egypt;
- Strong analytical, interpersonal, and listening skills;
- Experience supervising and training staff;
- A clear understanding of available community resources and how to mobilize them;
- Persuasive negotiating and representational skills;
- Confidence in communities capacities;
- Ability to work in difficult circumstances;
- Fluency in spoken and written Arabic and
- Basic spoken and written English.

If interested send CV to:

10 Heliopolis Mohammed El Arab St. # 3 3rd floor
Fax: 235-0343
E-mail: egypt@savechildren.org

Talabani slams Baghdad 'dictatorship'

An Iraqi Kurdish leader visited Cairo this week, hoping to enlist its moral and political support. Dina Ezzat reports

Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), met with Foreign Minister Amr Moussa during a visit to Cairo this week and said the removal of the Baghdad "dictatorship" was the solution to Iraq's problems.

"We are aspiring for Egypt's moral and political support, as a first step," Talabani said following his talks with Moussa on Sunday. "We hope that in the future we can get more than that." Talabani, whose group is one of the two main Kurdish factions in northern Iraq, said the Kurds were fully behind Iraq's territorial integrity. "We are against any and all plots that aim at dismembering Iraq. We are all for the national unity of Iraq," he said.

Talabani's visit came weeks after a delegation from the rival Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) held similar talks with Egyptian officials. "We have been wanting to come to Cairo for a long time and when our visit received the green light we came along," Talabani said.

Both the PUK and the KDP share control of the Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq where some four million Iraqi-Kurds are living. After the second Gulf War in 1991, the US took a unilateral decision — not included in any of the United Nations resolutions on the matter — to declare northern Iraq a no-fly zone.

According to one source close to the Iraqi opposition, the KDP-PUK struggle is often fuelled by neighbouring countries. Turkey, for example, fears that a strong Kurdish-Iraqi presence could set an example that the Kurdish-Turks may want to follow. Moreover, the source added, Iran has often tried to use the KDP-PUK clash to rein in both parties and allow itself a strong leverage in the north of Iraq. Iran is known to favour the PUK.

While in Cairo last week, the leader of the PUK condemned Turkish incursions into northern Iraq, in hot pursuit of Kurdish insurgents, declaring that any action by Turkey to defend its security should be confined to its own territory and not spill over into neighbouring states. "Turkey has the right to have a security belt on its territories but not on Iraqi territories," Talabani said. Turkey has been trying for more than a decade to crush activists of the leftist Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). The PKK claims to represent Turkish Kurds. PKK fighters often take refuge on Iraqi territory to escape Turkish troops.

Talabani, whose group is seeking self-rule for the Kurds of northern

Iraq, said Iraq's territorial unity was not threatened by the Kurds but by the "dictatorship" in Baghdad. "We believe that the problems of Iraq could only be solved through democracy. We are calling for a democratic, multi-party, federal Iraq," he said. Only a democratic regime will be able to lay to rest Iraq's ethnic problems, Talabani added.

Democratising Iraq, he said, "can only be achieved by the removal of the dictatorship in Baghdad." Talabani made it clear that by "dictatorship" he did not only refer to President Saddam Hussein but to his entire regime. Overthrowing the Baghdad government can be done "through the cooperation of all Iraqi people, those who are inside the country and those who are outside it," and "with regional and international help and support." Talabani added that he "welcomed" statements by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, calling for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's government.

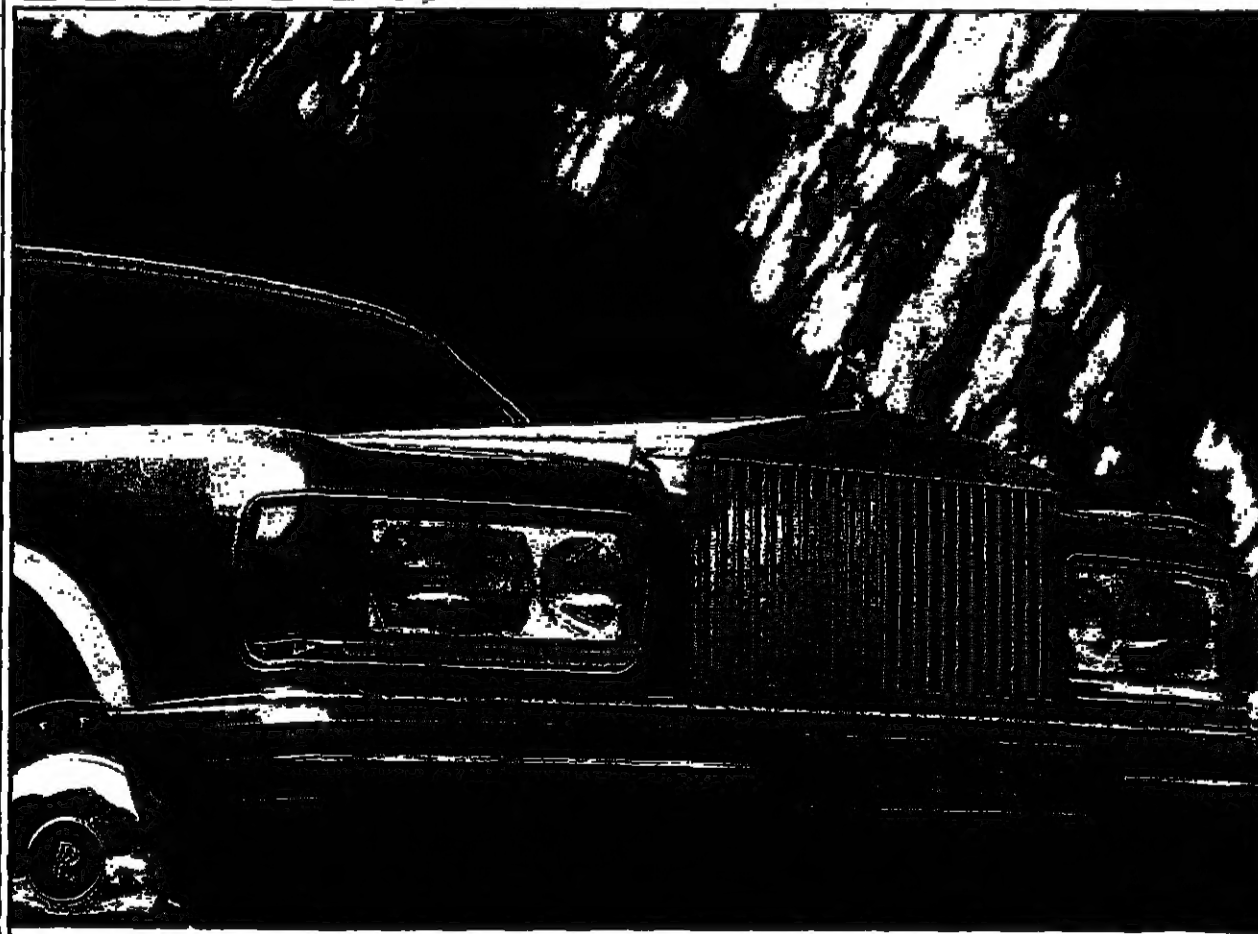
For his part, Moussa said that Cairo's interest in the Kurdish problem is long-standing. "We have always been interested in all issues that affect the Arab world, including the Kurdish problem," he said. "We should not forget that when we talk about northern Iraq, we are talking about Iraq and Iraq is an important Arab state. The situation in Iraq is on the agenda of our interests." According to Moussa, Talabani's visit to Cairo was part of a "series of contacts" Egypt is undertaking with all parties concerned with the situation in northern Iraq.

The reactivation of the Egyptian interest in northern Iraq should convey to Washington the message that Egypt will always remain a leading country in the region, an Egyptian diplomat said. Cairo's renewed interest

in having contacts with the Kurdish leader comes at a time when Turkey has intensified its military cooperation with Israel.

Talabani's visit to Cairo coincided with a visit by Ali Akbar Velayati, the foreign minister of neighbouring Iran. Last week in Tehran, the PUK

signed a peace deal with the Iraqi Kurdish Islamic movement to end their mutual clashes and help restore minimum stability to northern Iraq. Egyptian officials declined to say if they discussed the situation in northern Iraq with the visiting Iranian delegation.



السيرة رولز رويس

THE ROLLS ROYCE

When you buy a Rolls Royce, that means that you are acquiring a share in a proud tradition.

All Rolls Royce owners, appreciate that their car is a unique, hand-crafted creation with its own individual history. A

glance at a Rolls Royce is enough to tell you that it has benefited from an extraordinary level of craftsmanship. From the hand-stitched leather hide and seamlessly matched walnut veneer to the painstakingly created

radiator shell and meticulous engineering.

This is borne of Henry Royce's philosophy that "small things make perfection, but perfection is no small thing".

Impeccable taste indeed.



SHOWROOM:
9, El Obour bldg.,
Sahab Salem Rd.,
Heliopolis - Cairo
Tel: (02) 4017329

SHOWROOM
& SERVICE CENTER:
Cairo / Ismailiya Rd.,
beside the Airport.
Tel: (02) 2986381/82



Labour's clean sweep

Tony Blair, leader of the Labour Party, surprised even himself by winning the largest ever Labour majority in parliament. Jasim Al-Azzawi analyses the British election results

This century's longest epoch of Tory rule came to a screeching halt when the revamped New Labour Party trounced the Conservatives after 18 years of desperate search for a delicate blend of pragmatic policies and charismatic leadership. Out of 659 seats in the House of Commons, Labour won 418, its largest majority ever this century. This is the kind of majority that will help Labour carry out its popular mandate and legislation.

For most dissatisfied Britons, the election was long overdue and the outcome was clearly in favour of the camp of the new comeback kid leader, Tony Blair. But why should that be so? If, according to time-honoured political wisdom, victory follows in the trail of a robust economy, why did the Conservatives lose considering that since 1992 the British GDP has grown by 11 per cent and the number of unemployed fallen by more than 700,000? The answer lies in an American-style, carefully orchestrated Labour strategy designed to shed its old pernicious, socialist tax-and-spend image; dispel memories of protectionist Labour governments; shift to the right of centre of the political spectrum; and marshal its attack on Prime Minister John Major's economic policies at every turn.

During the unusually long election campaign, Labour questioned the wisdom of the government's monetarism, medium-term financial strategy and the impact on Britain of its policy of shadowing the German mark. However, all this pales in comparison to the political devastation suffered by the Tories on Black Wednesday, 16 September 1992, when the sterling tumbled out of the exchange-rate mechanism (ERM) of the European Monetary System. In a flash, the Conservatives lost their cherished mystical aura of financial savvy. Labour, smelling blood, leapt to the offensive and charged its political foes with ruinous economic incompetence and wasting North Sea oil revenues. Blair and his lieutenants cleverly manipulated figures to encapsulate the Conservatives' shortcomings. They underscored Britain's plunge down the World Bank's world-prosperity league table from 15th place in 1979 to 18th in 1994.

Surprisingly, as election time neared, the visible and vociferous disarray within the Tory government's ranks over its policy vis-à-vis Europe caused Prime Minister Major the most political damage. Despite the fact that Major had previously called for Britain to be "at the heart of Europe", the Conservatives have proclaimed themselves opposed to the evolution of the European Union towards a federal-style state.

The quarrelsome Eurosceptics within the Conservative Party, portraying themselves as representatives of a wide public fearful of an overweening Brussels bureaucracy, publicly undermined Major's authority and provided Labour with desperately-needed political ammunition to highlight the split in the Conservative ranks. Encouraged by progressive continental policies on workers' rights and social standards, Labour, in sharp contrast, adopted a pro-European position. The social chapter of the Maastricht Treaty proved a contentious dividing line. Labour stressed its intention of rejoining the social chapter of the EU and signalled its flexibility for an extension of qualified majority voting and role expansion of the European Parliament.

In stark contrast to previous elections, foreign affairs and defence issues failed to captivate the voters' attention. These issues were instead relegated to sparring debates among party experts, primarily because only cognoscenti could have spotted the fine line of disagreement. Both sides view NATO as the cornerstone of their defence policies. But the Conservatives intend to bar Russia from having veto power over the

acceptance of new members into the alliance, while Labour supports NATO expansion eastward if it is coupled with steps to include Russia in a wider security framework. Both are vehemently against proposals for a Euro-army as well as the creation of NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps. Labour supports the Western European Union as the European arm of NATO.

The new Labour government inherited substantial foreign-policy assets that empower the little island to wield a disproportionate influence in diplomatic, military and commercial realms. In addition to its membership in NATO and the Group of Seven industrial powers, Blair's government will be drawing on its strong traditional relations with the US and its position as one of the five veto-wielding seats on the UN's Security Council.

In their hustings, Labour candidates were diligent in pointing out that "defence and security" assessments reviews do not undermine British commitments and constitute no future defence cuts.

Labour had pledged British involvement in UN peacekeeping operations but intends to propose a series of practical political and financial reforms of the world body. Labour publicised its coherent strategic framework to eliminate \$5 billion in military waste and create a Defence Diversification Agency to assist defence firms and communities in moving from military fields to civilian-oriented markets.

Having abandoned its troublesome unilateral nuclear disarmament past, Labour would not scrap its Trident submarines, but limit their carrying capacity to 48 warheads each. Notwithstanding Labour's criticism of "treasury-driven cuts in defence spending", the new government will be under pressure from its own backbenchers to spend closer to the European average of 2.3 per cent of GDP.

The new Labour government will emphasise rapidly deployable forces at the expense of heavy armour and is keen to build on air force military cooperation with France and develop the Anglo-Dutch amphibious force. But in the post-Cold War reality of shrinking military expenditures, Labour will be hard pressed to keep its promise of stringent arms controls that bar arms sales to repressive regimes.

"We will continue to work with international partners to secure peace and stability in areas of tension such as former Yugoslavia, Kashmir, Cyprus and the Middle East." This was the extent of the Labour Party's manifesto's reference to the Middle East in contrast to detailed statements by senior cabinet members, including Major and Foreign Minister Rufford vis-à-vis the Middle East peace process. The latter, who lost his seat, commented: "To last, the settlement will need to respect basic Palestinian rights, not least the right to self-determination. To close off the option of a state would in my view be a mistake of the first magnitude."

Political experts foresee a continuation of Britain's Middle East policy of shadowing the US and counterbalancing the independent French attitude that seeks to garner a greater role to influence the final outcome of the peace talks.

"Britain will continue to support US efforts. But our role will not be to just support." Even though these words were uttered by Rufford, Britain was compelled to steer away from the US on two recent crucial UN Security Council resolutions: one against Israeli plans to build a new settlement in East Jerusalem.

If history is a reliable compass, Britain's policy towards the Middle East is not likely to change significantly and close attention to American interests will be the vital wink for Blair in 10 Downing Street.

The writer is a London-based Iraqi political commentator and political coordinator of MBC, the Arab satellite television network.



After having deeply buried the Tories at the polls in a landslide victory for Labour last week, a triumphant Tony Blair beams at a cheering crowd. "For 18 years... my party has been in opposition. It could only say, it could not do... Today, enough of talking — it is time now to do", said Blair as he prepared to take up residence at 10 Downing Street (photo: AFP)

Moussa on African tour

DURING a five-day African tour last week, the Egyptian minister of foreign affairs, Amr Moussa, promoted the bolstering of economic ties between Egypt and four African neighbours.

Accompanied by a fairly large delegation of prominent Egyptian businessmen, Moussa visited Djibouti, Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. The delegation met with African officials and businessmen to discuss future projects which could be implemented using Egyptian funds and expertise. Potential up-scaling of exports and imports between Egypt and the four countries was also discussed.

Moussa recalled that in the 1950s Egypt had played a prominent role in supporting the liberation of the African countries. By initiating the new projects Egypt was "successfully expanding its economic cooperation with its African neighbours", he said.

In Uganda, Moussa and the Ugandan president gave the go-ahead to the establishment of a large industrial zone in Uganda that would accommodate big Egyptian investment.

Discussions of the current political situation in the continent were also on Moussa's agenda. He delivered messages from President Hosni Mubarak to the Ugandan and Kenyan presidents.

Back to Cairo on Saturday, Moussa reported that his trip had been successful.

China in Africa

CHINESE Premier Li Peng began a 10-day African tour on Monday which will take him to Zambia, Mozambique, Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria and Tanzania.

Li's entourage includes the minister of foreign trade and economic cooperation, Wu Yi, the minister in charge of the state commission for economic restructuring, Li Tieying, and a host of top-level officials, businessmen and diplomats.

China hopes to rally African support for its stand against what it sees as Western, and particularly American, interference in Chinese domestic affairs. "China and Africa have further increased their consultations in international affairs," Li told reporters in Beijing just before he left on his tour. He stressed that there has been a qualitative shift in Chinese aid to African countries.

Both China and Africa have embarked on radical economic reform programmes and are liberalising their economies, Li said. "The Chinese government encourages Chinese enterprises to cooperate directly with African enterprises; it supports Chinese companies investing in Africa and the expansion of the sphere of economic cooperation," he added.

Li's visit to Africa is expected to strengthen ties already cemented during last year's visit to several African countries by Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

South Africa, which is not on Li's itinerary, announced a couple of months ago that it intends to sever relations with Taiwan.

Press freedom award

THE first UNESCO-Cano World Press Freedom Prize was officially presented to imprisoned Chinese journalist Gao Yu on 3 May at a ceremony marking the celebration of World Press Freedom Day in the Basque-Spanish city of Bilbao.

The \$25,000 cheque was handed to Timothy Balding, the director of Friej, the organisation that had nominated Gao Yu. Balding read a moving message thanking UNESCO on behalf of Gao Yu.

Unfortunately for Gao Yu, the Chinese authorities seem determined to obtain the annulment of the award on the grounds that it was illegal.

Beijing argued that UNESCO's Director-General Federico Mayor had no authority to give the award to a Chinese "criminal". It said UNESCO's decision was an "intrusion" into China's internal affairs.

Annan on reform tour

LAST Monday, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan left for The Hague on his way to Russia, China, Japan and Austria to pursue his efforts to garner political support for UN reforms. Aides say that Annan will also focus on international issues such as the conflict in Zaire during his five-nation swing, which winds up in Vienna on 20 May.

In The Hague, Annan was keynote speaker at a UN conference on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Russian officials say that Annan's visit is expected to boost the UN role in settling conflicts in the Commonwealth of Independent States, the loose grouping of 12 former Soviet republics.

At the end of the two-week tour, Annan will have visited the capitals of all five UN permanent members since taking office on 1 January this year.

New box of US tricks?

As Mobutu's reign draws to a close, Washington is setting its sights on doing business with Kabila, preferably after the rebel leader's wings have been clipped, writes Gamal Nkrumah

The moment of truth for Zaire is almost at hand. Forget last Sunday's meeting between Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko and the leader of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) Laurent Desiré Kabila about the South African war, the Congolese, anchored off the Congolese port of Pointe Noire. The meeting was arranged gose part of South African President Nelson Mandela. Nothing consequential came out of it. In fact, it was an embarrassment in more ways than one.

To begin with, Kabila kept Mandela waiting aboard the ship for two days — an affront to which Mandela did not take kindly. Not to be outdone, Mobutu stubbornly refused to step down even as Kabila's forces were closing in on the Zairean capital Kinshasa.

The United States, for its part, has serious misgivings about Kabila because of his involvement in the armed Marxist rebellion that tore Zaire apart in 1964-65. The US ambassador to Zaire, Daniel Simpson, and 38 American Embassy employees remain in Kinshasa but the vast majority of the estimated 500 American citizens residing in Zaire have been hurriedly evacuated to neighbouring countries. Meanwhile, Bill Richardson, Washington's special envoy to Zaire and ambassador to the United Nations, stood against as the Zairean pro-agonist performed a comical Punch and Judy show. Richardson's mission was to persuade Mobutu to step down gracefully and to get Kabila to acquiesce to the holding of free and fair elections and to share power with the Zairean opposition forces that did not take part in the fighting. Kabila is unlikely to accept such suggestions.

"This is a historic occasion that hopefully will lead to a peaceful transition in Zaire. There are no preconditions," Richardson told reporters in Kinshasa. The problem is that nobody assumes that the US has a hidden agenda that includes clipping Kabila's wings. Richardson is an old Africa hand. Last year, he successfully negotiated the release of aid workers who were abducted by a pro-government southern Sudanese faction.

However, the US cannot convince Zaire's neighbours that Kabila and Mobutu are much of a muckiness. The Zairean people, too, refuse to believe that Kabila is as bad as Mobutu. There are reports that Angola is amassing troops in the Cabinda enclave which lies within striking distance from Kinshasa. The US has warned Angola not to get involved in the fighting in Zaire.

Eritrea and Ethiopia are miffed at Zaire's inability to stop Sudanese government-backed breakaway southern Sudanese factions from using the 500km-long undefended Zairean-Sudanese border as a springboard to attack Sudan People's Liberation Army positions in southern Sudan. There is evidence that President Mobutu collaborated with Sudan and turned a blind eye to pro-Khartoum breakaway SPLA groups' incursions into northeastern Zaire. Anti-Ugandan government groups also use Zairean territory to hit government targets inside Uganda.

Rwanda, too, holds a grudge against Mobutu for aiding and abetting the former Rwandan government and assisting it in the genocide of ethnic Tutsi. After the fall of the rump Rwandan regime, Mobutu helped the perpetrators of the atrocities to flee Rwanda. He gave them shelter in eastern Zaire where they mingled with the hapless Rwandan refugees, wreaking havoc in the refugee camps and instituting a reign of terror. For Mobutu, the Rwandan refugees were cannon fodder in wars with neighbouring Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. These refugees are paying a heavy price today.

There is little love lost between Kabila and Washington, but the former Marxist guerrilla knows that he has to do business with Washington. Most Western observers believe that Kabila is prepared to go through the motions of getting to know

the Americans better.

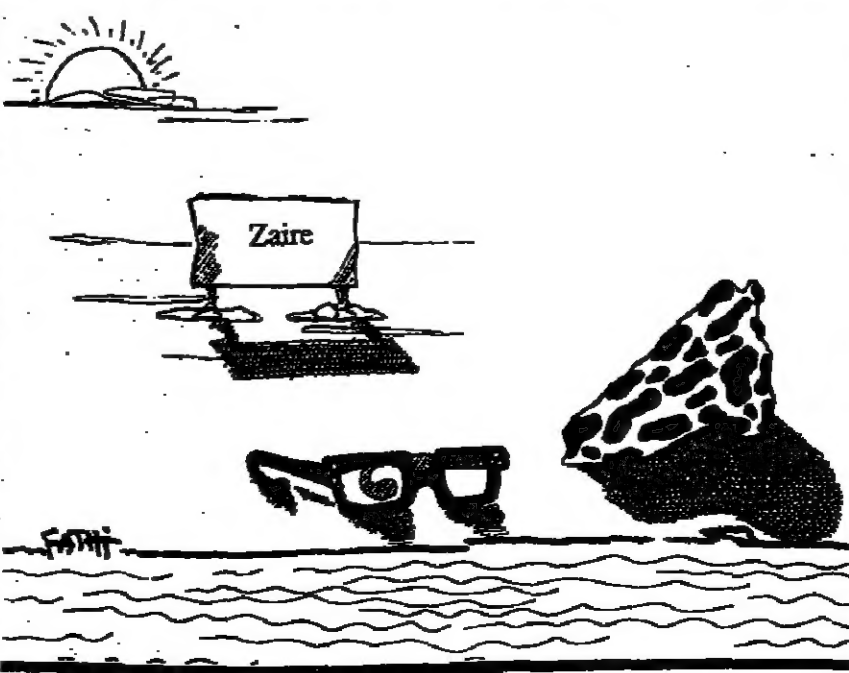
For love or money, there is little that can be done at this late hour about Washington's mistrust of Kabila. Even as he stands triumphantly poised to capture Kinshasa, Kabila is walking the tightrope. The ex-Marxist's adoption of World Bank and International Monetary Fund policies might strengthen Kabila's hand at the negotiating table — not with Mobutu, but with the Americans.

As an indication of the rules by which Kabila should play once he is in power, US Treasury Secretary Robert

Rubin announced last week that the international community had to find new ways to assist African countries that have adopted radical economic reform programmes. Rubin disclosed that the Clinton administration was working closely with the American Congress to introduce measures permitting increased access to US markets by African countries that have embarked on deregulatory and economic liberalisation programmes. He was also examining debt relief measures for reformed countries and the "more imaginative use of [US] trade and investment promotion programmes."

Rubin welcomed the decision by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to make Uganda the first beneficiary of a \$338 million debt relief programme. Under the leadership of President Yoweri Museveni, Uganda embarked on a 10-year economic reform programme at the end of the East African country's civil war in 1986. Today, Uganda has one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. Museveni has been demanding that Uganda and other poor and reforming African countries should be given greater access to world markets.

Next month, the IMF will decide if the two West African Francophone countries of Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso will become the next beneficiaries of the special debt relief programme. There is a consensus among the largest industrially advanced nations — the G7 — that countries implementing reforms and vigorously combating poverty should benefit from debt relief plans.



Egypt's export dilemma

An export-oriented economy is not made by mere legislative tools and a more efficient bureaucracy. It is, argues **Shafik Gabr**, a process and a culture, and these must be planned

A buyer in Switzerland prefers to import leather bags and briefcases at three to four times the price he would have paid had he opted for Egyptian leather goods. When asked why, the buyer responded, "Never again from Egypt. When I placed my first sample order, it was excellent. However, the next three shipments were late, substandard, came in the wrong colours and were unequal in quality."

Does this mean Egypt can't do quality work? Of course not. Egypt has many shining examples of export quality manufactured goods, notably textiles, ceramics and furniture. Similarly, in the services sector, architecture, engineering and tourism stand out, to name just a few. Yet the nation still has an export problem.

When many government officials, economists and businessmen speak of Egyptian exports, they call for the removal of bureaucratic impediments, for the mitigation of transaction costs, for the expansion of government subsidies, and so forth. While some items on this list of recommendations, such as subsidies, should be ignored and others, such as removing red tape, should be heeded, these suggestions do little to get to the heart of the matter. Moreover, no such recommendations will be useful so long as we fail to ignore the obvious — that there is a fundamental lack of planning and follow-up in the export process.

Too many observers see exports only at the point of transaction between buyer and seller rather than as a process. For Egyptian exports to grow substantially, and have a real, positive impact on growth, several factors must be recognised. First, export is a culture and not a transaction. Second, export requires discipline, not the ideology of "maafesh" (never mind), and "bakra, inshallah" (tomorrow, God willing). Third, export requires creativity and flexibility within a framework of excellence and reliability. Fourth, export is marketing, which means determining the buyers' needs and providing service beyond the call of duty. Finally, export is not only today's products, but also tomorrow's. This means that heavy investment must be injected in research and development.

The export process, therefore, is not merely the transaction, but a series of steps beginning with product development and leading up to after-sale service and follow-ups. When talking to an Egyptian exporter of auto components about changing the specs for a North African buyer, his response was, "The buyer should buy what I produce and not what he is asking for." As if to confirm his point, he added, "France buys it."

Given the definition of exports, this is entirely the wrong attitude. The right attitude is to focus on the points above. Underlying all are the common denominators of all successful ventures: credibility and discipline.

The writer is president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt.

Investment law under investors' fire

Although finally approved by an overwhelming majority in the People's Assembly, the government's new Investment Guarantees and Incentives Law came under fire from several MPs and businessmen. The 47-article law aims at boosting production and foreign direct investments in Egypt by providing a generous package of investment guarantees and incentives. Under the new law, investors will be able to enjoy such perks as extended tax exemptions, protection against expropriation, nationalisation and the expropriation of assets and industries.

The law, however, was described by some MPs as negatively affecting many of the existing investment incentives and granting the government excessive power in allocating tax exemptions. In addition, several opposition and NDP parliamentarians argued that not only were some of the law's most important articles vague, but that at least three were unconstitutional.

Among the most vocal opponents of the new law was Khaled Mohieddin, leader of the leftist Tagammu Party. Mohieddin criticised the law for "providing equal incentives for all kinds of projects, regardless of their function."

"How can I offer equal tax exemptions to a potato chip project and an industrial project," he queried. "Placing both these kinds of projects on par is due to the philosophy behind the law, which is based on the assumption that tax exemptions are the most important incentives and stimuli for attracting investments."

The leftist MP also leveled criticism

against the law for stipulating that no company will be subject to mandatory pricing. "Even in the most economically liberalised countries, services such as electricity and drainage systems, which are provided to companies, are subject to mandatory pricing by authorities," explained Mohieddin.

The strongest attack against the law came from Ayman Nour, a member of the liberal New Wafd Party. Nour argued that contrary to popular belief, the incentives and guarantees granted under this law are not generous enough.

"In fact, it [the law] negatively affects investment incentives and privileges already granted to a number of projects," he continued. "For example, the law strips land reclamation projects of their present 10-year tax exemption period, and takes away from low-cost and rent-based housing projects their current 15-year tax exemption."

Further compounding matters, he claimed, was the fact that the new legislation clearly violates article 119 of the constitution, which stipulates that the levying of or exemption from taxes can be imposed only through specific legislation. "Articles 4 and 27 of the new law, however, give the prime minister the power to determine the basic rules for tax exemptions," stated Nour. "Not only does this violate the constitution, but it also strips parliament of its exclusive right to pass tax laws."

Also topping Nour and a group of business MPs' lists of complaints was that the law, for no discernible reason, seeks to re-

A new investment law, which has been sharply criticised by MPs and businessmen alike was, nonetheless, approved with an overwhelming majority in parliament. **Gamal Essam El-Din** reports on the parliamentary debate, while **Mona El-Fiqi** reports on businessmen's reactions

place the General Investment Authority (GIA) at a later stage with a yet-to-be-determined administrative authority. The GIA is responsible for licensing, investment projects. Some deputies are speculating that a new ministry for investment affairs may be established to take the place of the GIA.

Joining forces with Nour was Samah Ashour, the only Nasserist Party MP in parliament. Ashour maintained that the law violated the constitution by giving investors too many special privileges at the expense of other citizens. "In Article 6, the law prohibits the filing of any criminal suits against investors until the concerned administrative authority, which is to replace the GIA, has been given 15 days to voice its opinion on the charges," he pointed out. "Why should we place an obstacle in the way of the filing of lawsuits against investors?" he asked. "Will this not give foreign investors a form of unconstitutional immunity and provide them with ample time to escape from Egypt before any action is taken against them?"

But explaining the government's position on these issues, Finance Minister Mohieddin El-Gharib noted that the new law not only brings under one banner all existing investment incentives laws, but also brings Egypt's investment legislation in line with the latest international standards.

While the finance minister emphasised that the law seeks to eventually replace the GIA — after a transition period — with a new administrative body, this does not mean that its present role will be phased out.

"The GIA will remain specifically responsible for promoting investment projects and attracting foreign investors to Egypt," said El-Gharib. Moreover, he added that the law protects investors from mandatory pricing for their products, "because this has proven to be one of the most essential and effective incentives in attracting foreign investors to Egypt."

The criticism of the law was not restricted to the parliament. Lambasting the law, some businessmen have argued that it reduces investment incentives in the new industrial cities and fails to reduce customs on capital goods.

Talking on the latter point, Ahmed Arafa, head of the Egyptian Federation of Chambers of Commerce (EFCC) investment division, was blunt. "Law 203 of 1989 sets customs duties on capital goods at five per cent," he stated. "Given that all other Arab and European countries do not levy any taxes on capital goods, this figure is excessive." While the new law does not tackle this problem, reducing the tax to one per cent, for example, would be a compromise that, within the framework of GATT, leaves Egyptian products competitive with foreign goods.

Taking the businessmen's arguments to another level, Sherif Dellawer, of the Alexandria Businessmen's Association (ABA), argued that this law should not



have even been issued. It is, he said, a carbon copy of the law currently on the books, with the only real difference being that it reduces the privileges offered for investment in the new industrial cities.

"The new articles in the law are so few that it would have been better if the changes had been made to the current law," said Dellawer.

Prior to the passing of the law, the ABA had prepared a report detailing its objections to the proposed legislation. First and foremost, the ABA had maintained that the copy of the draft law submitted to it by the Ministry of Public Enterprise was completely different from that which was approved by the FA.

The copy sent to the ABA states that all commercial, individual or civil companies listed in the commercial records will be able to take advantage of the new investment guarantees and incentives," recalled Dellawer. "The law passed by the Assembly, however, limits tax exemptions to projects listed in article one of the law."

New business bills in the pipeline

The government has referred to the People's Assembly a new batch of economic bills aimed at facilitating investment procedures and increasing production rates. **Gamal Essam El-Din** followed the debate

The People's Assembly last week received a list of new economic bills aimed at speeding up investment procedures and helping investors cope with recent economic policy changes. The list of bills presented to the Assembly is part and parcel of the government's drive to bring about legislative reform as a means of creating a more investor-friendly business environment for the next century.

Topping the list of these long-awaited bills is an IMF-inspired bill entitled, "The Regulation of the Bidding Procedures Law". The bill, which is an amendment of Law 9 of 1983, aims at bringing legislation up to speed with the recent economic developments in project implementation and eliminating a host of procedures currently confronted by public-sector agencies and private enterprises when submitting bidding and tender offers for national projects. The bill applies to all state administrative agencies and national service and economic organisations.

Following a cabinet meeting last week, Information Minister Sawwat El-Sherif indicated that the bill attaches special importance to a contractor's ability to successfully undertake the project in awarding bidding contracts. To this end, the competitive base is widened to include private bidders, as well as public sector enterprises.

"The new bill provides private and public bidders equal opportunities to submit bids for

the government projects and the provision of services," said El-Sherif. The government views this as a major step forward given that businessmen maintain that the current law discriminates against private entrepreneurs in the bidding process.

The existing bidding procedures law, argued Mohamed Abul-Hein, a prominent businessman and MP, is based on awarding public contracting firms government projects, regardless of how efficient they really are. "The present bidding system awards bids in light of cost criteria, regardless of the efficiency of the contractors," he said.

The new bill, added El-Sherif, also sanctions the system of direct contracting in such operations as providing services, purchasing equipment and implementation of transport projects (provided that the value per operation does not exceed LE40,000 — a 100 per cent increase from the level allowed under the existing law). It also raises the value of direct contracting for the purchase of goods monopolised by foreign agencies from the current level of LE8,000 to LE250,000. Direct contracting, which is not part of the current law, said El-Sherif, is a major step aimed at speeding up investment project contracting procedures.

Next on the list of new economic bills is a legislative amendment of the sales tax. The amendment aims to elim-

inate a 10 per cent sales tax on capital goods such as industrial equipment and machinery, with the objective of reducing the cost of industrial production and project implementation. The amendment's explanatory notes state that the bill will also lead to a 20 per cent reduction in the fair market price of a number of capital goods (either imported or locally produced goods). It also enables industrial producers to claim the value of the sales tax they had previously paid on capital goods.

Complementing the above law, is another draft law tackling the establishment of companies. Known as the Unified Companies Bill, this piece of legislation was submitted by the government to the Assembly this week. The long-awaited bill is a first-of-its-kind in Egypt, unifying all previous laws governing companies and investment projects in order to reduce red-tape and encourage investors to launch new enterprises. It overrides as many as 15 existing investment laws, including Public Sector Law 203 of 1991. The bill also includes a special chapter on companies that are 100 per cent state-owned.

On the role, the new legislation seeks to govern all kinds of companies, regardless of their legal status (i.e. joint stock, limited liability). It also introduces a new type of company, the One Man Project Company, as well as a new sys-

tem of corporate amalgamations and mergers.

The government also submitted to the Assembly last week two draft laws on the government's national budget for fiscal year 1996-97 and the new five-year national development plan for the period from 1997-2002.

According to Planning Minister Zafar El-Bishry, the new five-year plan is aimed at raising the national growth rate to around 7 per cent in 2002, up from its present level of 4.5 per cent, by boosting the economy's competitive capacity and the volume of national investments.

The plan, which is estimated to cost LE400 billion, devotes LE58 billion in fiscal 1996-97 to raising productivity and investment rates in different sectors and implementing a number of plant projects. El-Bishry said that the private sector will be responsible for implementing 63 per cent of the targeted investments in the plan's first year. These investments include the implementation of a number of development projects in Sinai, Upper Egypt and the New Valley, he said.

The role of private investments is secured to increase through the plan's five-year duration to reach 80 per cent in 2002. "This falls in line with the government's push to privatise companies and de-regulate public sector monopolies," stated El-Bishry.

Imported lessons

Mona Gasseem looks into the reasons why Egypt's exports in no way match its export potential

Despite Egypt's colossal export potential, the country's balance of trade deficit in October 1996 stood at \$808.05 million. This figure, given the recent efforts at promoting economic growth, with particular emphasis on export development, is striking and raises the question: Why has Egypt been unable to realise the level of growth attained by many Asian and Latin American countries?

While these "tigers" natural and human resource base, along with their geographical location, is no better than that of Egypt, their rate of growth is, in a large part, a result of the introduction of comprehensive development policies aimed at upgrading economic performance and, subsequently, exports. These policies seek to make all forms of economic activity export-oriented. The first step in this process has been the full liberalisation of the economy, trade and exchange rate. The next step was to implement privatisation programmes, shift assets into private hands and, therefore, increase their export opportunities and competitive capacity.

The Egyptian government began implementing similar steps in the 1990s. However, the measures have, to date, not been able to reverse the country's export deficit — a problem that has its roots in the years that followed the nationalisation drive which characterised the 1960s. This trend of the '60s extended public sector control of the production sector and, consequently, its domination of pricing policies. Similarly, the subsidisation of prices affected efficiency levels in all industrial sectors, leading to inefficient production methods and low quality goods.

During the 1970s, Egypt introduced a policy change in the form of import substitution, which meant that most of its production facilities were focused on producing goods previously imported. This policy, however, left the export pro-

duction sector grossly neglected. Moreover, the trade protectionism pursued by the government during this decade to protect local production undermined research and development efforts and the importance of quality in manufacturing.

Even until the beginning of the 1990s, the few industries that were able to avoid these pitfalls eventually suffered from the absence of any export promotion policies, such as tax incentives, as well as complicated export procedures and the high cost of freight and transportation services.

Another major factor contributing to the weakening of the export sector was the state's heavy reliance on non-export foreign currency resources such as tourism, Suez Canal revenues and cash remittances from Egyptian expatriate workers. Also factoring into the equation was the government's lack of awareness of the importance of foreign market analysis as a means of boosting the competitive edge of some key Egyptian industries.

These shortcomings created an economic domino effect of sorts. Egypt's inability to promote its industry abroad reduced the willingness of foreign investors to channel their capital into the country. This, in turn, meant that foreign investments did not play a main role in enhancing Egypt's export sector, which was still plagued by a number of problems resulting from long years of government intervention.

Now on the threshold of a new millennium, and as a signatory or participant in a number of major economic agreements, the Egyptian government is upgrading the performance of the export sector as an integral part of its economic reform programme. To ensure that these policies are successful, Egypt must also be willing and able to benefit from the development experience of the economic tigers who have recently travelled down the same road to reform.

Reform road still rocky

EGYPT'S economic growing pains are far from over, suggested the World Bank's Khaled Ikrum at a briefing for reporters. Shereen Abdel-Razek attended. Just days before the start of Egypt donors' Consultative Group meeting in Paris, Khaled Ikrum, the World Bank's Cairo representative, praised the fruits of Egypt's reform programme, but pointed out that the country will still have to tackle "second generation problems".

According to Ikrum, Egypt succeeded in solving the first generation problems that accompanied the implementation of the initial phase of its reform programme, including

the reduction of inflation.

"It's now time to deal with the second generation problems," he stated. These problems include labour lay-offs as a result of privatisation, the slow pace of economic reform and the fact that the average Egyptian has yet to witness the tangible outcome of this programme.

Ikrum stressed that there are still two main problems confronting the Egyptian economy, weak exports compared to imports and a lack of savings. In South East Asian countries, he noted, savings on average account for 35 per cent of the GNP while in Egypt it is half this amount.

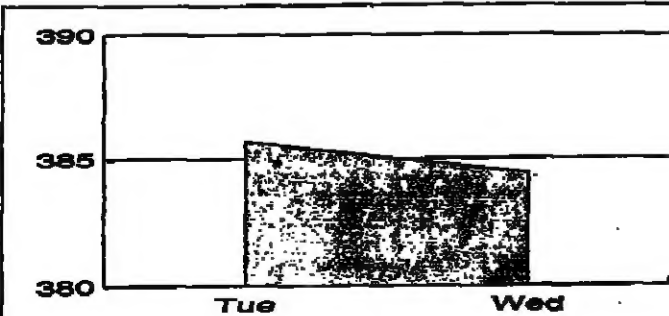
The World Bank's Cairo representative also stressed the fact that the prevalence of weak and inefficient management in Egypt has had a negative impact on Egypt's overall economic performance.

"While Egypt's labour force is very skilled, the absence of sound management undermines their productivity," he stated. Further compounding the problem is the lack of financial incentives for workers. This, said Ikrum, is a problem resulting from Egypt's socialist years. With good work not being rewarded and poor work not being punished, employees have no incentive to improve their performance, he stated.

Market report

IN A working week slashed to two days due to the Easter and Labour Day holidays, the General Market Index slid to 389.01, down 4.6 points by 30 April. Over the two-day period, market turnover totaled only LE141.6 million, less than half the previous week's balance.

Leading the market in terms of the number and value of shares traded was the Development and Engineering Consulting Company (DECC), whose initial 10 per cent equity offering was 2.5 times oversubscribed. The high demand prompted the company to increase the



number of shares floated to 8.8 million, or about 25 per cent of the company's total equity. Trading in DECC's stock, therefore, accounted for 33.4 per cent of total market activity while the value of its trans-

actions was 24 per cent of the total trading.

In other trading action, the shares of the Canal Navigation Agencies Company recorded 10.16 per increase in price, and leveled off at LE5.8. On the losing side, shares of the Abu Qir Fertiliser and Chemical Industries Company lost 9.75 per cent of their opening value to close at LE92.06.

Out of the 105 companies whose stock changed hands this week, the share prices of 38 increased, 46 decreased and 21 remained unchanged.

Edited by Ghada Ragab

En vente tous les mercredis

Lisez

- ☐ Elections au Yémen
Changement de donne.
- ☐ Plateau de Guiza
Le Sphinx suscite les délire.
- ☐ Importations égyptiennes
Les effets de la libéralisation.
- ☐ Récitateurs du Coran
Les stars de la psalmodie.
- ☐ Zaïre
Les derniers jours de Mobutu.

Rédacteur en Chef
Exécutif
Mohamed Salmawy

Président
et Rédacteur en Chef
Ibrahim Nafie

Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

In the section on education in his annual report of 1906, Lord Cromer, the British High Commissioner, writes, "One of the indications of the recognition of the growing importance of education is the promotion of Mr Dunlop to adviser to the Ministry of Education. *Al-Ahram* was to be one of his most vociferous critics."

Douglas Dunlop served in Egypt from 1882-1914. He was selected as adviser to the Ministry of Education in 1890. Six years later he was promoted to the position of secretary to the ministry.

Dunlop was charged with implementing the educational policies of the British occupation authorities. One of these policies was to place the Ministry of Education under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Works, virtually relegating education to a mere department. Marginalising the Egyptian government's role in education in this manner gave Mr Dunlop a virtually free hand in the administration of this ministry which, under the name of the Ministry of Schools, had formerly been one of the major government departments of the modernising state that was founded by Mohamed Ali. The merging of the two ministries in 1894 was also a convenient way for the British to eliminate the influence of Ali Mubarak, the pioneer of modern education in Egypt in the latter half of the 19th century. Ali Mubarak was dismissed from his post that same year.

A second aspect of British policy was to gradually abolish free education. Lord Cromer's annual report of 1893 states that when the British came to Egypt, they found that "all the money the government spent on education was allocated to the instruction of the children of a small sector of the population, most of whom came from the wealthiest families. The British have therefore sought to change this situation and, since 1884, efforts have been devoted to exacting certain fees with the aim of the gradual abolition of free education."

To Cromer the policy was vital. "It is in the manner of ending a concession that has so far consumed all the finances of the Ministry of Education. Moreover, free education was instituted to help the poor. However, in reality it was only the well-to-do who benefited."

Egyptian nationalists, meanwhile, were correct in assuming that the policy had objectives other than those mentioned by Cromer. One motive was to reduce the numbers of Egyptian intellectuals who formed the backbone of the resistance to the occupation. At the same time, government expenditure would be reduced and money saved could be put towards the repayment of Egypt's creditors, of which Great Britain was one.

It would fall to Mr Dunlop to hasten the pace of its implementation. After less than a year as secretary to the Ministry of Education, Dunlop instituted what *Al-Ahram* termed "the big coup." On 8 June 1898 the newspaper reports: "Hardly has he been appointed to the position of secretary than what Egyptians most feared has transpired."

180

Egypt's tradition of free education, begun by Al-Azhar and developed in a modern form by Mohamed Ali, came under threat during the British occupation. In the vanguard of the campaign for its gradual abolition was Douglas Dunlop, secretary to the Ministry of Education. Using reports from *Al-Ahram*, Dr Youssef Labib Rizk follows Dunlop's machinations, and examines the less than lofty motives of the British government.



Illustration: Mohamed Hammad

He has overturned the entire system, killing elementary education by abolishing its duration and killing secondary education, which is now barely equivalent to the twentieth part of its counterpart in all other civilised countries." However, the true reversal in education policies would take place over the course of the following three years, when Dunlop put into effect the primary mission for which he was appointed: ending free education.

The story of free education in Egypt was related by an *Al-Ahram* reader, Abdel-Meguid Shaaban, in the newspaper's 4 December 1902 edition.

Government schools providing free education were instituted by Mohamed Ali. Under Ali Mubarak's ministry, Shaaban continues, "it was decided that each student would pay 15 piastres a month for his education. However, the people grumbled that this was prejudicial to the poor. The government displayed its compassion and decided to accept every 20 students out of 100 on a free basis."

Shaaban then proceeds to relate how, in the wake of the British occupation, government subsidised education was swept away. In the beginning, he tells us, the government decided to raise annual fees to LE6 per year for day students and LE12 per year for boarders, the additional sum being intended to "cover food, clothes, books and educational materials." At the same time, the government retained the "free tuition department," as it was known.

Throughout the 1890s the fees continued to increase steadily, and by the turn of the century they stood at LE10 per year for day students at the elementary level and LE20 for boarders. Shaaban observed that the last fee rise caused parents to think twice about sending their children to a government school. "When parents saw that they were paying more than LE1 per month for the education of their child (since the scholastic year is nine months long and the tuition is LE10), some decided that they would rather pay this tuition to the foreign schools."

Prompted by Shaaban's article, *Al-Ahram* also contributed a study of its own

on the history of free education in Egypt. Appearing in 1903, the newspaper wrote that in 1868 there were 13 government schools. This situation continued until 1874 when the financial crisis began to lay a stranglehold on the Khedive Ismail. To alleviate the strains on the Ministry of Education budget, the government of Riyad Pasha passed a law requiring that the sons of the well-to-do pay some tuition fees. However, when the Riyad government fell, "this project fell into oblivion."

Al-Ahram continues that, until the British occupation, 95 per cent of the students enrolled in government schools had benefited from free education. In the immediate wake of the occupation, this figure fell to 80 per cent "as the British began to raise tuition fees and reduce the percentage of students eligible for free tuition. In 1884 they began to implement the law that was promulgated under the Riyad government as a means of ensuring the gradual elimination of free education, since they knew that if they eliminated free education in one go they would empty the schools of all their students."

When Dunlop assumed the position of secretary to the Ministry of Education in 1896, "he instituted tuition fees in the School of Engineering, which had previously been free, virtually emptying the school. As a result, two years ago, the school began to accept students without tuition fees in order to lure back into the system, at which point they began to charge fees again. As for the students of the School of Agriculture, who also used to enjoy free tuition, as of last year the Ministry began to accept only one in 45 students free of charge."

The outcry against these policies was such that the British authorities had to rally together to defend themselves. Sir Eldon Gorst, then British adviser to the Ministry of Finance, argued that the government's policy was "intended to restrict education to those youths who would be nominated for government employment." And Dunlop commented: "We are abolishing free education in order to avert mutual envy and also to reach a position where those

who pay fees are not having to support those who do not."

"If envy were truly the reason for abolishing free education, then Mr Dunlop should abolish schools in their entirety on the grounds that the weak envy the strong and the lazy envy the energetic," responded *Al-Ahram*.

Dunlop delivered his major blow to free education in 1902. On 5 March of that year, he assembled all the inspectors of the department of education and told them that free tuition would be abolished at all levels of public education and that charity organisations and *awqaf* (religious endowment) foundations would henceforth be responsible for sponsoring poor students who showed promise. *Al-Ahram* was outraged. "Dunlop thinks that the Ministry of Education was not created in order to provide free education for the people but rather as a commercial market for the buying and selling of learning. We raise our voice against the abolition of the free tuition quota in government schools."

With the exception of the pro-British *Al-Muqattam*, all other national newspapers joined the campaign against Dunlop's policy. A glimmer of hope appeared when, on 28 November of that year, the Higher Council for the Ministry of Education met in order to discuss the issue. *Al-Ahram* appealed to the members of this council to remember that there is a greater potential for talent among the general populace than among the elite. This is why all other nations have made education both compulsory and free. We do not ask our government to do that; however, we do ask it to apportion a space so that all the talents of the nation can shine through."

All that transpired, however, was that the government retained free instruction on telegraphy in the School of Crafts and Industry and provided for a quota of non-paying students. In this the government had made no concessions. The National Railway Authority was already paying for the training of students on the telegraph and the same authority had stipulated that the Ministry of Education subsidise the education of a certain quota of students in

exchange for conceding to it a portion of the land that fell under its administration. Dunlop addressed the problem of the drop in enrolment in the schools of engineering and education by telling students who had previously failed and had been dismissed from these schools that they would be permitted to return in order to complete their studies. Another result was the establishment of privately run community schools sponsored by Egyptian patrons.

A second major task that fell to Dunlop was to Anglicise public education in Egypt, which, since Mohamed Ali, had been conducted in the French medium. In the beginning of the academic year of 1898 Dunlop summoned the heads of those schools which did not have a department for English language instruction and told them to establish English departments. Several weeks later, he issued instructions to close the French departments in 17 schools.

However, for his policy of supplanting French with English education to succeed, a reasonable number of trained English teachers would be required. Towards this end, Dunlop travelled to England in the summer of 1902. Evidently, this recruiting mission did not proceed as quickly as Dunlop had anticipated. On 16 September of that year, *Al-Ahram* wrote, "Mr Dunlop, the tyrant of the Ministry of Education, will be returning on the 29th of this month bringing in his train several English instructors for Egyptian government schools. The reason for his delay is that up to the present he has not found sufficient candidates that comply with his tastes."

Another of Dunlop's measures was to Anglicise the administration of the schools, a policy that was certain to cause considerable confusion.

The clash between French and English cultures precipitated by Dunlop in the Egyptian school system also caused waves abroad. The controversy was epitomised by the debate between the British language magazine, *Nineteenth Century*, and the French language *Debat*, over the course of 1903.

The *Nineteenth Century* had nothing but praise for Dunlop's policy. In response, the

Debat reminded the British that there were Catholic schools scattered throughout Egypt that continued to offer instruction in French to the children of the well-to-do, in spite of the British occupation. Moreover, the government schools had been set up in accordance with the French curriculum long before the British came to the country and they continued to follow this curriculum. The author also warned that the British policy of Anglicising Egyptian upper educational institutions was doomed to failure, "particularly as regards the School of Law, for Egyptian law is based on French law and in order to study this subject properly the students must be able to consult French legal sources."

It is likely that this debate influenced the negotiations that ultimately gave rise to the entente cordiale that was concluded between Great Britain and France less than a year later. One of the articles of the entente provided for the freedom of French educational institutions to operate in Egypt.

Dunlop was disliked just as much for his commanding management style as for his policies. He was a proponent of the view that one had to be firm in dealing with Egyptians. Under the headline "The Dunlop Innovation," *Al-Ahram* discusses how the Dunlop concept of strictness was put into effect in Egyptian schools. The immediate manifestation was the increasing severity of punitive measures schools, including temporary suspension. "Dunlop punishes students by depriving them of their education, thereby punishing their families at the same time, since it is they who pay for their child's education," *Al-Ahram* wrote. Dunlop also issued a circular in which he announced that government school teachers were prohibited from teaching in private schools or on a private basis. "Teachers have been quivering in the next decision Dunlop would come up with," commented *Al-Ahram*.

In order to offset the increasing vehement criticism, Dunlop gave an interview to the pro-British *Al-Muqattam*. He was "a disciplinarian," he explained, "which means that I encourage the maintenance of law and order and the harsh punishment of those who break the law." Orientals are loath to maintain law and order, and this was why the Egyptians disliked him, he added.

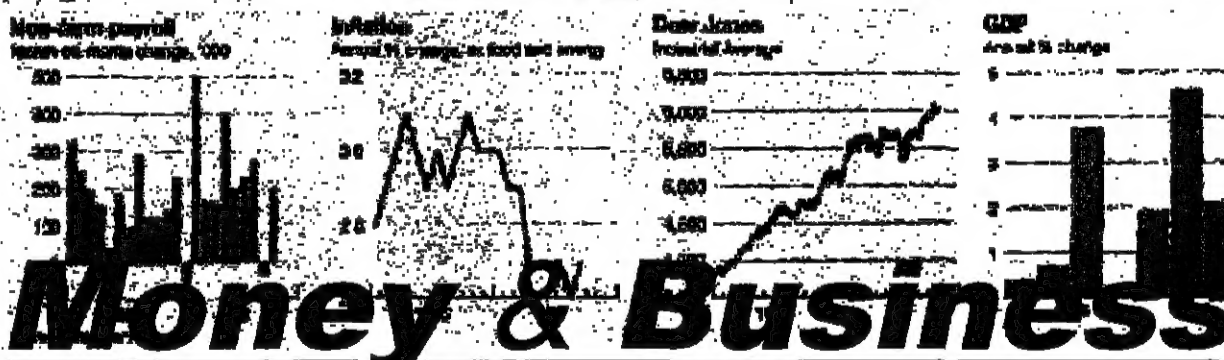
Dunlop's policies were to provoke more than sharp criticism. The years 1904-5 saw a wave of widespread strikes, beginning with the schools of education and engineering and escalating to a full-scale national teachers strike in May 1904. Responsible for subduing the situation, Dunlop appointed Saad Zaghloul as the minister of education, an appointment that marked the beginning of Dunlop's final chapter in the history of education in Egypt.

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.

Enhancing vocational training

THE GENERAL Federation for Workers Unions will form a committee headed by the president of the federation to work on setting a future plan for the federation's activities. El-Said Rashid, president of the federation, stated at the opening ceremony of the construction workers vocational training centre in El-Qattaniya.

He noted that the strategy of the federation is geared towards human resources and providing skilled labour for projects such as the New Valley project. He added that the federation will seek to benefit from the expertise of the early pensioners at all public sector companies.



Taxation conference next week

THE FACULTY of Commerce, Ain Shams University, will organise its ninth conference on taxation which will handle the amendments expected to be introduced to the tax law in order to encourage investment. Dr Reda El-Adi, dean of the Faculty of Commerce, will chair the two-day conference.

The conference, to be held under the auspices of Dr Mohamed Gharib, minister of finance, and Dr Abdel-Wahab Abdel-Hafez, president of Ain Shams University, will focus on means of eliminating the adverse effects of the tax law.

Coca-Cola announces outstanding first-quarter increases

THE COCA-Cola Company reported that first-quarter earnings per share increased 43 per cent to \$0.40 due to outstanding global unit case volume growth. Also contributing to first quarter results was a gain resulting from the execution of the company's strategy of strengthening its global bottling system.

"Our extremely strong first quarter unit volume gain demonstrates the continuing power of our aligned global bottling system and is a solid start towards, once again, achieving our long-term volume and EPS growth objectives in 1997," said Robert C. Goetzeta, chairman, board of directors, and chief executive officer. "We remain sharply focused on strengthening our system to capture the immense opportunities that exist around the world."

In the first quarter, worldwide unit case volume grew 9 per cent and gallon shipments of concentrates and syrups increased 7 per cent, both exceeding previously communicated volume estimates.

"This rewarding performance is the result of continued investment in the marketplace, and it is paying off around the world — including sizable profitable growth in our most established market, the United States," Mr Goetzeta noted.

In the North American Group, first-quarter unit case volume grew greater than 8 per cent, on top of a 7 per cent increase in the first quarter of 1996. Gallon shipments of

concentrates and syrups increased 2 per cent during the first quarter. US case unit volume growth was 9 per cent on top of an 8 per cent growth in the first quarter of 1996. Volume growth was strong across all US channels, especially immediate consumption channels, enhancing value for the Coca-Cola system and its customers.

"Results like this in our flagship market, coupled with strong gains, demonstrate again that our US business is far from being a mature market for soft drinks, in fact, it is capable of dramatic growth," said Mr Goetzeta. "Our system is doing a superb job if implementing our overall marketing strategy and executing at the local level. As a result, our core brands continue to show excellent results."

In the Africa Group, first-quarter unit case volume increased 10 per cent. Unit case volume rose 8 per cent in the Northern Africa Division, led by very strong growth in South Africa. Gallon shipments increased 25 per cent in the first quarter.

In the Middle and Far East Group, first-quarter unit case volume increased 8 per cent, on top of a 14 per cent increase in last year's first quarter. Unit case volume grew 19 per cent in China, 6 per cent in Japan, and 15 per cent in the Middle East Division. Gallon shipments rose 13 per cent in the first quarter.

The company's new income increased by 39 per cent and, with

fewer shares outstanding, earnings per share increased 43 per cent. The company purchased approximately 4 million shares of its common stock in the first quarter of 1997. Since 1 January 1984, the company has repurchased 31 per cent of its common shares then outstanding, or a cumulative total of slightly over 1 billion shares, at an average cost of approximately \$10 per share. On a weighted average basis, the US dollar was approximately 10 per cent stronger for the first quarter versus key currencies in the prior year.

In line with the company's well-established strategy of strengthening its worldwide bottling system, gains recognised on bottling transactions provide the company's soft drink business with one of its earnings streams. This earnings stream is in addition to the earnings contributed by the concentrate part of the business as well as by the earnings of the consolidated bottling operations. The other earnings stream of its business is the company's participation in the earnings of bottlers in which it remains an equity investor. The company's long-term objective of growing earnings per share in the upper teens to twenty per cent is driven by these earnings streams, all of which are an integral part of the soft drink business.

Techtextil opens in Frankfurt

THE FRANKFURT Exhibitions Authority has organised an international fair, Techtextil, this year from 13-15 May 1997 which will include companies specialised in the textiles and garment industries in general, as well as companies manufacturing special textiles used for industrial and technical purposes.

A large number of companies will welcome more than 12,000 visitors from all over the world who visit the international exhibition to learn more about the companies displaying their fabrics and

textiles (natural and synthetic) in addition to textiles used for industrial and commercial aims. The exhibitions feature specialised pavilions including: Agrotech, Bullitech, Clothtech, Geotech, Hometech, Indutech, Meditech, Mobitech, Ecotech, Packtech, Protech and Sporttech.

Among the topics to be covered at this international exhibition include: technical weaving, textiles and modern technology, new developments in applying alternative technologies, finishing, textile engineering, and of course, a display of

new products.

The German-Arab Chamber of Commerce offers its services to companies and individuals wishing to attend the exhibition. Entry tickets to the exhibition are LE125, which entitles the bearer to access the fairgrounds for the duration of the exhibition. Airline tickets and accommodations can be arranged by calling Noha Hasan or May Hussein at 3414023. For further information, contact Hassan Saleh at the chamber, tel 3413662/3413664.

\$500mn authorised capital

\$100mn issued and paid-up capital

Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt

S.A.E.

The Zakat Fund

Vocational Training Centre

announces

the continuation of free summer courses in

- Computer
- Typewriting
- Knitting
- Sewing
- Handicrafts
- Carpet-weaving

starting 15/5/1997

Registration and information:

Head office:

5 Muassassa El-Nour St., Teret El-Gabal — Zeitoun

Tel: 2546495/2547063

Al-Ahram Weekly

The demolition man

In Israel this week, a two-minute siren tore through the bustle of traffic, mourning the deaths of six million Holocaust Jews. On that same day, an Israeli army bulldozer leveled four Palestinian houses located near the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba. In a traditionally Israeli manner, the mourning of atrocities committed during war is capped by a similar disregard for the rights of others at a time when peace remains the prime objective.

As a carrot to entice the Palestinians back to the negotiating table, Netanyahu plans to offer Arafat progress on commitments made under Oslo. Consequently, should the Palestinians agree to turn a blind eye to the settlement construction on Jebel Abu Ghneim, they can have their own air and seaports. And, should they agree to an acceleration of the final status negotiations, despite repeated reminders by the Israeli premier that sovereignty could amount to little more than a distant dream, the withdrawals from the West Bank will continue. These re-deployments, incidentally, are required under the Oslo and subsequent accords, which have already been signed, sealed and, par for the course, yet to be completely delivered.

Arafat, however, is not likely to concede to such requests solely on the basis of *prima facie* evidence. Therefore, Israeli President Ezer Weizman met with him on Tuesday to attempt to thaw out the freeze that has characterised relations between the two parties since Netanyahu decided to carry out the Abu Ghneim construction. Theoretically, once Weizman has softened up Arafat enough, US envoy Dennis Ross will arrive, his briefcase full of ideas which, the Palestinian president believes, are unlikely to yield results.

And so the search will go on for a formula for peace. Israel may grudgingly agree to implement the agreements it signed but, most likely, only after it knocks down a few more houses, builds new settlements and raises an uproar about security as a precondition for peace. The real precondition, however, is the same catalyst that will factor into the formula for peace — there are no conditions, save for trust and honouring previous agreements.

Al-Ahram Weekly

Chairman of the Board: **Ibrahim Nafie**
 Editor-in-Chief: **Hosny Gindy**
 Managing Editor: **Hani Shukrallah**
 Assistant Editor: **Wadie Kirolos**
 Assistant Editor: **Mona Anis**
 Layout Editor: **Samir Sobhi**
 General Manager for Advertising: **Hassan Hamdi**

Al-Ahram Offices

Main office
 AL-AHRAH, Al-Galaa St. Cairo.
 Telephone: 5786100/5786200/5786300/5786400/5786500
 Telex: 20185/9334 Fax: 5786126/5786333

Overseas offices

USA
 Washington DC: Aref El-Ghazali, Al-Ahram Office, Suite 123, 529 National Press Bldg., Washington DC 20005; Tel: (202) 737-2121/2122
 New York: Aref El-Ghazali, Al-Ahram Office, 350 Ft. Chrysler Bldg., 403 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10174-0300; Tel: (212) 672-6442; Telex: 497 9428 ITT U.S.; Fax: (212) 286-0285
 Los Angeles: Soraya Aboul Seoud, 600 S. Curson Ave., 402 LA, CA 90036, USA; Tel: (310) 487-5941; Fax: (310) 487-7084

Russia
 Moscow: Abdel-Malek Khalil, Al-Ahram Office, Kozlovskiy Pro Dm 74 Kp. 50, Moscow; Tel: 343 4014/243 1434; Fax: 230 2879

Canada
 Montreal: Mustafa Sany Sadok, Al-Ahram Office, 800 Rene-Levesque Blvd., West Suite 2440, Montreal H3B 1X3, Quebec; Tel: (514) 876 7825 Fax: (514) 876 9343/514 876 7825

United Kingdom
 London: Aref El-Ghazali, Al-Ahram Office, 203 - 209 North Gower street London W1 2NU
 Tel: 0171 388 1153, Fax: 0171 388 3130

France
 Paris: Sherif El-Sibouhany, Bureau Al-Ahram 26, Rue Marbeuf, 75008 Paris; Tel: (1) 57 7270; Al-Ahram F; Fax: (1) 428-93963

Germany
 Frankfurt: Mohamed Elise El-Sharkawi, Al-Ahram Bureau Friedrichstr. 15, 60523 Frankfurt; Tel: (069) 914-2800 (069) 914-281 Fax: (069) 729751

Austria
 Vienna: Mustafa Abdalla, 2331 Votterdort Orts Str. 253; Tel: 072625 04800; Telex: 13 2726 GIGI A; Telex: 04800

Greece
 Athens: Abdel-Aziz Darwish, 69 Solonos St., Third floor, Kotonaki 106-74, Athens, Greece; Tel: 36434503

Japan
 Tokyo: Mohamed El-Dessouki, Duke Aoyama 4-11, Higashi 4 - Chome Shiba - Ku, Room 402, Tokyo; Tel: (03) 240 63944; Fax: (03) 340 6625

Italy
 Mustafa Abdallah (S.A.B.) 00019 ROMA-V, Guido Basti, 34, Tel: 333250 Fax: 3332294

Brazil
 Rio de Janeiro: Ahmed Shediad, Cx. Postal 2395, CEP. 20001

Annual Subscription Rates

Egypt: £139.00
 Arab Countries: \$60.00
 Other Countries: \$150.00
 Send your subscription order to:
 Al-Ahram Subscriptions Department,
 Al-Galaa St. Cairo, Egypt.
 Subscription payments can be made directly in cash or by cheque to the same address.

Name: _____
 Mailing Address: _____

Newsstand Rates Overseas

Australia	\$4.0	Libya	1000 Liras
Austria	\$6.25	Malta	50 Cents
Belgium	\$7.50	Morocco	50 Dirhams
Canada	\$7.50	Mozambique	2000 Mts
Denmark	\$7.50	Qatar	100 Rials
France	\$7.50	South Africa	10 Rand
Germany	\$7.50	Sweden	20 Krona
Greece	\$7.50	Syria	2000 Liras
Holland	\$7.50	Turkey	2000 Liras
Hong Kong	\$7.50	U.A.E.	100 Dirhams
India	\$7.50	United Kingdom	4 Pounds
Indonesia	\$7.50	USA	\$15.00
Japan	\$7.50	West Bank	50 Cents
Korea	\$7.50	Yemen	50 Rials

Al-Ahram Weekly



Advertising
 Direct: (202) 3391071
 Fax: (202) 5786023-5786126
 Telex: 92002-93345
 Marketing
 Direct: (202) 5786078
 Fax: (202) 5786833-5786089

A matter of determination

The Arabs face two problems in Israel, writes **Amin Hewedy**: topography and demography are the keys to the struggle

From the date of its inception, following the so-called war of independence in 1948, Israel has acted as a foreign body implanted in a region that rejects it, and recognised that its presence must be imposed by force. It is wrong to suppose, however, that Israeli leaders have arrived at a consensus favouring only one theory for Israel's security, and it would be equally wrong to think that their theories are always constant and unchanging. Nonetheless, there are four parameters that have never changed. Sanctioned by the consensus of the decision-makers, these are, in the order of priority: demography and immigration; topography and the imposition of the status quo; a superpower's support for its proxy; and, finally, the destruction and fragmentation of the Arab states.

Ben Gurion was the first to devise the bases of the comprehensive Israeli security theory following the establishment of the state. What concerns us at present is his view on immigration. According to him, "Israel must by all possible means seek to multiply the number of immigrants. Such an endeavour is the core of Israel's security problem. In the long run, it will support Israeli expansion policies in the region." Ben Gurion believed all Jews of the world constitute one nation, and all must stand by Israel, even if their governments are opposed to it. Furthermore, any Jew living outside Israel is violating the precepts of the Torah, and, therefore, a "godless Jew, who will remain only partly Jewish pending his immigration to Israel." Ben Gurion had

linked topography with demography, a link which remains viable in Israeli thinking to this day. Recently, news agencies reported that the number of Jewish immigrants to Israel during the past month was only 36,000.

In his book *A Place Under the Sun*, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu quotes the Israeli Central Statistics Bureau's findings on demographic evolution. A comparison between the levels of population in 1967 and 1993 reveals that, prior to 1967, Jews made up 63.5 per cent of the total population of Israel, as compared to 36.5 per cent of "non-Jews". In 1993, Jews represented 60.5 per cent and non-Jews made up 39.5 per cent of the total population.

While encouraging high immigration rates, Israel has also been changing the topography of the land it occupies. It has levelled hills, filled valleys, cut away woods, constructed roads, bridges and embankments. The other facet of Israeli policy involves changing the demographic status of the population to preclude any possible means of resolving the problem of refugees and displaced persons, when the time comes to discuss them.

It must be said again: Israel is moving along two main lines. Netanyahu, on the political level, has undertaken diversion tactics to draw attention to himself. Meanwhile, his infrastructure minister, Ariel Sharon, is able to play the principal role: bringing out the bulldozers to seize the land and alter its features through the construction of settlements. This is all done under cover of silence, night and day, while the Amer-

ican veto effectively ties the Arabs' hands. The Israelis are currently applying this strategy in East Jerusalem. While attention is focused upon levelling Har Homa, thousands of immigrants are flowing in through ports and airports. The new arrivals need shelter, housing must be built on additional tracts of land, the land must be levelled in preparation for the construction of houses, and so on, down to the last detail.

On one hand, therefore, Israel seeks to modify the demographic balance; on the other, it implements changes on the ground, in the topography of Palestine. The demographic problem in Israel is not as simple as optimistic official statements make it seem, however. In reality, it is a time-bomb on the verge of going off. In the West Bank, for instance, the double-edged problem is that, essential for military purposes, to ensure the defence of Israel to the east, and, therefore, the key to Israel's future, the same time, the demographic problem, constituted by one million Arabs living within and near this belt, makes it equally imperative to relinquish it. Either way, Israel is confronted by a severe problem. The high birthrate among the Arab population will also tilt the balance towards an Arab majority in Israel within 30 years. As one "progressive" forecast, "the Arab world have given Israel 1.4 million Arabs, a heavy acquisition indeed, particularly in view of the expected population increase, which will render the two peoples equal in number within 14

years." The *Jerusalem Post* quoted two demographers as saying that, "by holding on to the Occupied Territories, the Jews may become a minority by the year 2000."

There is yet another problem: that of emigration. According to *A Place Under the Sun*, the eighties witnessed the emigration of 30,000 persons from Israel annually. It is a figure which gives pause, especially after the peace agreement signed between Egypt and Israel, which should have given the Israelis more reason to stay in their country rather than emigrate. The problem was magnified by the kind of people leaving: skilled and specialised workers emigrated and were replaced by unskilled, underprivileged, more recent immigrants such as the Palestinians. This is an indication of instability in the economic and security conditions of the country, a situation which flies in the face of Israeli propaganda reports. Emigration poses a serious threat to the Israeli government, and is also perceived as a highly dangerous weapon in the hands of the Palestinians. Through suicide bombings and other operations within Israeli territory, they can disseminate terror and instability in Israel, increasing the exodus and reducing the influx of immigrants. Other factors render this problem still more complicated. Temporary immigrants to Israel from Egypt and the Arab world have caused the rate of mixed marriages to rise drastically. While some Arab regimes have sought to curb this phenomenon, others argue that mixed marriages will necessarily strain the

ideology of a state based on the creed of pure Jewish blood, and force the Israelis out of the social ghettoes in which they have confined themselves.

According to Netanyahu, at any rate, the continuous influx of Jewish immigrants will solve all the problems of the regime. The struggle for Jewish immigration, in this perspective, is equivalent to the fight for Israel's survival. He also undermines the value of the conclusions drawn by the demographers, claiming that their deductions are always erroneous.

The Arabs now face a grave problem. One aspect relates to topography, since Israel continues to occupy land, and to change the land's features through the expansion and construction of settlements and roads. The other aspect is demography. Immigrants continue to arrive, and will bring about a change in the population structure. Meanwhile, the US continues to cover up activities on the ground, while pouring funds into Israel to help finance immigration and implement settlement policies.

It is futile to imagine that the bulldozers invading the land and altering its features, or the ships and planes bringing in thousands of immigrants, can be stopped by ineffectual counter-measures, like the statements occasionally issued by Arab regimes. In the balance of power, these are ineffective weapons; for the struggle, first and foremost, is one of determination.

The writer is former minister of defence and former head of the Egyptian intelligence service.

The Harriman Declaration

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed comments on the round table held outside New York on 20-24 April under the joint auspices of the United Nations and Columbia University to discuss the new media and their implications for the new millennium

On 24 April, the participants at the round table jointly sponsored by the UN and Columbia University on Communication for the Promotion of Peace, Development, Democracy and Respect for Human Rights issued a number of recommendations. Because the meetings were held in the mansion of the late US politician and financier Averell Harriman, which his family had donated after his death to Columbia University, the document in which the recommendations were issued was dubbed the Harriman Declaration.

Though couched in the somewhat equivocal diplomatic language of the UN, the recommendations are nevertheless clear enough when they touch on information problems related to the developing countries, as illustrated in the following excerpts: "Efforts should be pursued through public/private partnerships that involve civil society expertise and funding on local, national, regional and global levels, and particularly in developing countries"; "Partnerships among businesses, governments, international organisations and civil society should be encouraged to develop and facilitate telecommunications, hardware and software to the particular needs of developing countries"; "The expansion of communications and new media in developing countries must include better access to infrastructure, including reliable power supply".

An abridged version of the background paper which formed the basis of my oral intervention at the round table was published in the last two issues of *Al-Ahram Weekly*. One of the main themes I raised was that the Information Revolution was bringing about a new reality with no precedent in history, namely, the emergence of some sort of collective human intelligence. The removal of time and space constraints thanks to the Internet has made it possible for human endeavour to benefit from the collective creative effort of different thinkers located at different points on the globe. The first generation of machines replaced human muscle; thanks to electricity and electronics, a second

generation assumed some of the functions of the human brain: the Internet represents a third generation which can be identified as the embryo of a collective human brain. While collective intelligence is not yet artificial (machine) intelligence, it is nevertheless a necessary if not sufficient condition for its creation.

The discussions focused at some length on one of the more negative aspects of the Information Revolution, which is its in-built propensity to create a growing discrepancy between its key element, namely the computer, and the infrastructure necessary for the spread of computers worldwide. According to what has come to be called Moore's Law, computer power increases every 18 months. If this law can be extrapolated into the future, the power of a computer in the year 2002 will be one million times greater than that of the first prototype in 1946. On the other hand, infrastructure cannot progress at anywhere near the same rate. The deputy president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, eloquently summed up the situation when he said that "More than half of humanity has never made a telephone call. There are more telephone lines in Manhattan than in all of Sub-Saharan Africa."

This has led to a phenomenon which I described as a kind of "information apartheid", a new form of bipolarity that is neither between East and West nor North and South but between those who are computer-literate and those who are not. Because the former are capable of creating virtual reality, all reality reproduced on a screen is amenable to manipulation; moreover, the new information-privileged will have every interest in manipulating reality, if only to keep their underprivileged counterparts under control. This makes "information apartheid" morally detrimental to both the privileged and the underprivileged in the information era, to both the manipulators and the manipulated.

An awareness of the dangers inherent in this dichotomy led the round table to stress the im-

portance of trying to bridge the growing gap between those who are computer-literate and those who are not. An "electronic Marshall Plan" was proposed whereby businesses specialised in the field of computer-development, whether hardware or software, would be encouraged to invest in developing the infrastructures of the underdeveloped countries, both in the fields of electrical power and telephony. This would be beneficial for both sides: the information corporations would be able to expand their markets to the planet as a whole, while the peoples of the underdeveloped world would acquire easier access to electricity, telephone lines and, eventually, to the Internet.

The main obstacle in the way of such a development is conceptual. The new wizards of computer technology are young technocrats who dream of becoming multi-millionaires overnight. Greg Riker, who represented Microsoft president Bill Gates at the round table, told me that the company employed some thirty thousand researchers, of an average age of 32, twenty thousand of whom were already millionaires. These computer whiz kids are not concerned with the historical, cultural and civilisational dimensions of the human users of their discoveries and are unaware how negative the implications of ignoring these dimensions can be. On the other hand, the UN establishment, UNESCO, academia, politicians and journalists concerned with the future of the new technology realise that the debate must be placed in a historical-cultural setting but lack the technical know-how to find a common language with the new computer technocrats. This is where an interface should be developed.

As I told Riker, "You, the sons of the computer age, are for the uninitiated like a meteorite that has fallen from the sky onto our planet. If the question of developing an interface between the planet and the meteorite is not seriously addressed, we will all suffer from the consequences. If, on the contrary, it is handled properly, a new dawn can set in for us all."

Conflict or debate?

By **Naguib Mahfouz**

The next international conflict will not be between nations but between cultures. Rivalry and opposition, divergence and convergence have always existed among the cultures of the world, in unipolar or multipolar systems. We must endeavour to prevent the relation between cultures from developing into conflict; we need a dialogue, because the world is now smaller than it ever was. For example, the Internet has opened windows all over the world. It is natural that different cultures and civilisations will acquire greater influence, and this will help dialogue to develop.

So why should we assume confrontation? True, there will always be rivalry between cultures, but this is a welcome phenomenon, since it will favour the fitter and more efficient rather than the more powerful. No matter how powerful a culture may be militarily or economically or politically, it cannot impose itself upon a people unless they are convinced of its superiority to their own culture. If they are convinced, then the new culture is more qualified than the one it replaced.

There is no hatred involved in cultural rivalry, nor should it ever reach the point of confrontation. Were it to reach that point, it would be a sign that we are witnessing not a cultural conflict but a political battle — a very different issue. Cultures should engage only in dialogue. Either one culture will emerge as the most appropriate, or various cultures will coexist. There is always room for a plurality of cultures in art, ideas and literature.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week

Who trusts Netanyahu?

Al-Mussawir "Egypt's outlook for overcoming the present crisis in the region can be summarised in three points: First of all, the situation in the Middle East will remain dangerous so long as Netanyahu's government continues to build the Jebel Abu Ghneim settlement and to flout Security Council resolutions and the Oslo and Madrid accords. Secondly, any initiative to circumvent the present impasse must begin by halting settlement activities in Jebel Abu Ghneim and supporting the Egyptian efforts to arrange a meeting between Netanyahu and Arafat in Cairo. Thirdly, a resumption of talks between the parties concerned should involve a commitment on both sides to uphold the Madrid formula of exchanging land for peace and to implement all the accords signed in Oslo in full." (Makram Mohamed Ahmed, 2 May)

Al-Ahram "It has been said that the Middle East has become a region where US influence is paramount and where the United States has the final say. Events of the recent past all point to the birth of American new colonialism. During the Gulf War former President George Bush sent his forces to plunder the wealth of the region, establish US bases and introduce US warships to Arab waters. This invasion, disguised as a rescue mission, was a move to revive old colonialism. And President Bill Clinton, by allowing Israeli tanks freedom of action in Jerusalem and the West Bank is not just bowing before Israeli designs but announcing that Israel has become the watchdog guarding new US land." (Mustafa Mahmoud, 3 May)

Akhbar El-Yom "The problem is that the US is trying to pressure the Arabs into granting more concessions. It does not wish to understand that the Palestinians have nothing left to concede, that Syria will not give up an inch of its land and that there will be no peace or security in the region without the return of legitimate Arab rights. The US will continue to pressure Egypt, blackmail the Arabs and side with Israel. It will not change its position unless it is forced to do so. This will not happen until it realises that the Arabs possess alternative means to bring about real peace. These alternatives are many, beginning with a resumption of Palestinian resistance acts in the occupied territories and ending with a boycott of US products." (Gafar Aref, 3 May)

Al-Ahram "This is not the first time we misinterpret Washington's ideas about the peace process. The problem is we have short memories and naively believe that Washington deals with Cairo, Damascus, Beirut, Gaza and the rest of the Arab capitals in the same way it deals with Tel Aviv. We also mistakenly believe that it wishes to see the peace process succeed in accordance with the principles of the Madrid accords, which we signed — Five years have elapsed since Madrid and we must begin again (negotiating according to Israeli demands, or more accurately, what the Zionist lobby demands)." (Nabil Khoury, 4 May)

Al-Ahram "The deadlock in which the peace process finds itself despite recent US efforts is the natural outcome of erroneous US policies. ... No one can dispute the responsibility of the US administration for the unprecedented impasse in the peace process. The United States has encouraged Israel neither to respect previous agreements nor to withdraw from occupied Arab territories and recognise the Palestinian right to self-determination. The collapse of US mediation — is a deliberate attempt to slaughter the peace process and sacrifice it on the altar of Israeli ambitions and Zionist policies hostile to the Arab nation." (Taha El-Magdoub, 4 May)

Rose El-Youssef "The CNN has attempted to improve the image of Netanyahu by featuring him with King Hussein in a televised debate. Hussein appeared as the wise ruler who was out to please everyone and was almost apologetic when referring to Netanyahu's views on settlements and the non-recognition of accords. He was also ready to extend his hand to him and have more talks with him. As for Netanyahu, he wants to speed up talks dealing with all outstanding matters: Jebel Abu Ghneim, the building of settlements and the siege imposed on the Palestinians. He denied that he had ordered the building of new settlements and that one of his ministers had proclaimed the peace process dead. Who trusts Netanyahu? No one, not even King Hussein." (Fathi Khoury, 5 May)



As the Iranian presidential elections approach, and with the visit to Egypt of the Iranian foreign minister, it seemed appropriate to portray President Rafsanjani. I began with the eyebrows, conveying but not quite an argument. Indeed, all the details of his face — the open mouth, the teeth — are characterised by a certain disjointedness reflecting the complexity of his character.

Compiled by **Gafar Nassar**

Close up

Salama A. Salama

Fuel to the fire

Whatever the reasons for the postponement of Turkish President Suleiman Demirel's visit to Egypt, it has come at a time of growing Arab concern over cooperation between Israel and the Turkish military establishment, and projected strategic links between Israel and Turkey, backed by or in cooperation with the US, to counter any threats from Syria or Iran.

Since the first signs of military cooperation between Turkey and Israel appeared a year ago, Egypt requested details from the Turkish government regarding the extent of this cooperation and the strategic policies which underlay it. This was one of the principal issues discussed by President Mubarak and President Demirel last June. The Egyptian president was assured that Israeli-Turkish military cooperation merely comprised training and was not directed against any Arab state. The Turkish president added that his country had no intention of concluding a military pact with Israel.

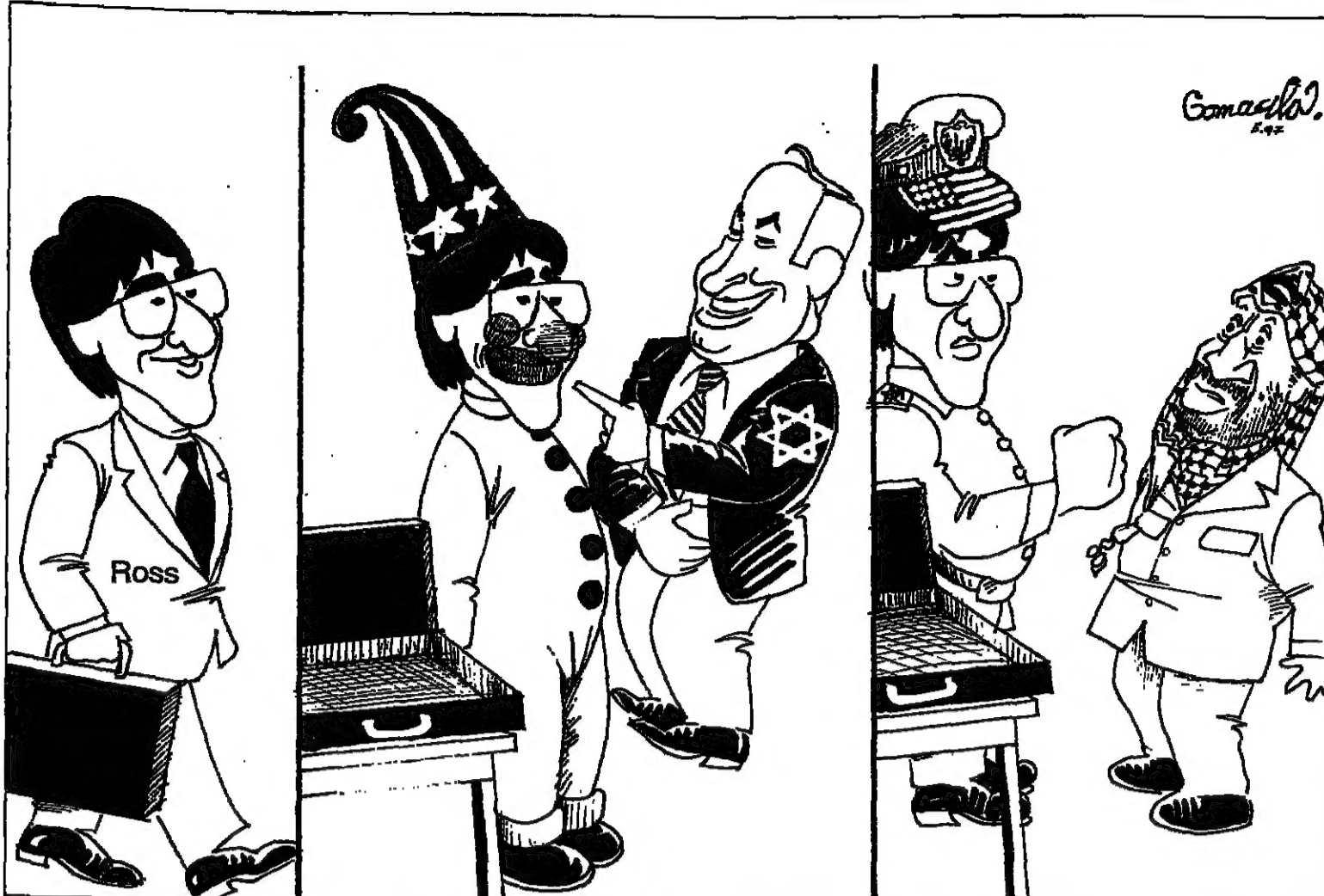
In the course of the last few days, extremely important visits have been exchanged by Israeli military authorities and high-ranking members of the Turkish military establishment, pointing to a considerable development in this cooperation. Israeli airforce planes have received permission to train in Turkish airspace, and agreements have also been signed approving the exchange of intelligence information between Israel and Turkey. An agreement was also concluded to provide repair facilities for Turkish F-4 planes to the tune of \$630 million. The agreement also offered Turkey technical assistance in fighting so-called Kurdish terrorism and provided for joint manoeuvres in the Mediterranean to counter Syria and Iran and to face any sudden crisis in the Gulf.

It is to be expected that these developments in military and security cooperation between Turkey and Israel should cause considerable concern in Arab circles, especially as they happen to coincide with specific Israeli threats against Syria, backed by Turkey recently in a very obvious way when the Turkish chief of staff accused Syria and Iran of supporting the Kurdish Labour Party and fundamentalist elements in Turkey. This coincides with Israeli accusations that Syria is developing its chemical weapons capabilities, to which President Assad responded with the remark that those who possess nuclear weapons have no right to accuse others.

The danger of these developments lies in the fact that Turkey is still considered a regional neighbour with strong historical and cultural ties to the Arab states. It represented a factor of stability and equilibrium in the Middle East. Turkey was always careful to preserve this position, even in the most critical moments of tension and confrontation between the Arab and Israeli. For this reason, Turkish moves towards an alliance with Israel, which is governed by the most extremist and violent of governments, must give rise to severe doubts despite repeated Turkish assurances.

These developments seem to stem from the domestic Turkish situation, where a full-scale confrontation is brewing between the military establishment, which upholds a secular state, and radical Islamist trends represented by Erbakan's Rafah Party. The European Union's reluctance to admit Turkey to the European family, as well as the confrontation with the Kurds, may be the main factors prompting the military to strengthen cooperation with Israel, in the hope of solving the Kurdish problem once and for all.

Whatever the reason, it is obvious that the formation of new military alliances and strategic poles can only add fuel to the fire of the Arab-Israeli conflict. If it is true that the United States is supporting and encouraging this alliance, it can only be considered to be igniting the conflagration in the Middle East.



Toward total appropriation

During the early part of this year a meeting between various Arab and Israeli intellectuals was held in Copenhagen with the help of the Danish government. Let us accept the notion that these were intellectuals, even though one of the Israeli participants was an intelligence operative who had many years of well-documented service throughout the Arab world (especially Lebanon), and the Jordanian contingent was reportedly made up of military officers designated for this task by the government (which was unable to find independent civilians to participate in the Copenhagen meeting). Immediately after the meeting, a declaration was issued which was supposed to chart a course towards peace between Arabs and Jews; the claim was that all participants in the meetings were representative of a wider, more popular movement than the few who had gathered in Copenhagen. No evidence was given for this. Nevertheless, the document and news of the meeting were widely circulated and debated in the Arab world with only one or two references to it in the US media, which treated the whole matter as a non-event. Since I do not have all the facts about what took place in Copenhagen, except for the text of the declaration, which struck me as rather weak, I shall confine myself to a few issues that have been raised by participants in the subsequent discussion. These seem to me interesting and worth looking at, especially if one can avoid the frequent name-calling and invective used to discredit adversaries, a most disagreeable aspect of the whole business. And, since I am much more interested in the Arab side, I shall restrict myself to questions that seemed important to it.

One other introductory point seems worth making. Although I was referred to and briefly discussed in an interview with Lutfi El-Kholi — a protagonist at Copenhagen — I myself have had nothing to say about the meeting before now. In the interview, Nuri El-Jarrah asked El-Kholi whether my views on the peace process might have had a bearing on the meetings. Mr El-Kholi responded by saying that, even though he respected me as a literary scholar, I was not, after all, a political person — which seemed to imply that, because I was literary, I had little qualification for anything.

Far be it for me to suggest that I am a political expert or intellectual like Mr El-Kholi, or that I have any of his considerable accomplishments. But it does not seem to be enough of a reason to dismiss someone's views just because he is not accredited by an expert. The whole point of engaging in political debate, I have always thought, was actually the duty of every citizen, not just the prerogative of certified professionals like Mr El-Kholi.

One of the main issues in the debate over Copenhagen has been the question of change in Israeli political thinking: is there a constituency for real peace? Have the conditions in Israel changed sufficiently to warrant hope and a serious Arab political investment in the process of transformation? All the evidence available from history, from Israeli political behaviour, and the like points most discouragingly away from positive answers to these questions. In the various apologies on behalf of the peace process as well as the prospects for peace with Israel, there seems to be little Arab awareness that, in speaking about, dealing with, or analysing Israel, we have to do with a unique political phenomenon. Israel is not an ordinary state, nor was it ever meant to be. It is "the state of the Jewish people," not of its citizens, who include about 900,000 non-Jews, which is the official Israeli designation for the Palestinian minority in the state. As Professor Israel Shahak said in *Al-Ahram Weekly* recently: "The history of modern Zionism has shown a singleness of purpose which is unmatched by any other contemporary

A "popular alliance for peace" was not established in Copenhagen, writes **Edward Said**. Supporters of the peace process, in general, have limited themselves to abusing their opponents, and advocating greater American hegemony

movement. So powerful have been the motivations of its leaders and adherents, so deep is their certainty in the righteousness of their course and cause, that violations of morality, law and human decency have repeatedly been accepted as unfortunate but unavoidable consequences of the fulfilment of their destiny — reclaiming the Biblical Jewish homeland and establishing the Jewish state of Israel."

Were this description simply a matter of ideological conviction in an abstract sense it would be bad enough, but it is also an accurate characterisation of Israeli action since the founding of the state in 1948. I have had occasion in these columns to mention the work of Nur Masalha, the Palestinian-Israeli scholar who has written two books on the centrality of the concept of "transfer" in Zionist thought and practice. His second book, *A Land Without a People*, published in England this year, ought to occupy enthusiasts of the peace process and Copenhagen somewhat more than ill-considered general encomia to the need for new thought, and a new Arab mind. Masalha traces the actions of the Israeli government against the Palestinians from 1948 until the present, showing how the exodus of 1948, the attempts during the 1950s by Ben-Gurion and his associates (Dayan, Rabin, Peres, Allon, Yadin, Herzog, and the others) to redraw the map of the Middle East so as to eliminate or dissolve Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, the military occupation after 1967, the policies towards Palestinian Israelis, the settlements, and even the Oslo Accords, were all aspects of much the same obsession: to rid Palestine of its original Arab Palestinian inhabitants by expulsion, repression, colonisation, and a kind of willful blindness towards them as human beings. For example, the Israeli attorney general wrote in 1971 about deportations by Israel of Palestinians from their homes to Jordan: "Deportation of a person to Jordan is... neither deportation to the territory of the occupying power nor to the territory of another country. It is more a kind of return or exchange of a prisoner to the power which sent him and gave him its blessing and orders to act." (p.131). According to Masalha, there has been a longstanding effort to force Palestinians to emigrate, and even to provide funds for them to go to Argentina, Venezuela and elsewhere in Latin America.

During the 1980s, a powerful right-wing extremist movement gradually gained power and influence over politics in Israel, encouraged, of course, first by Begin, then by Shamir, and now by Netanyahu. Groups like Gush Emunim, the Kach, Tehiya, and Moleket parties, and the Whole Land of Israel Movement, have not only openly advocated annexation of Palestinian land, but also an unyieldingly hostile view of Palestinians as "aliens" in the land of Israel. True, Masalha concedes, there have been liberal Israeli critics of these tendencies and parties, but not enough of them to stop such groups or to make them modify their extreme views. Besides, it should be obvious that the influence of the right-wing has been greater than that of the liberals, who seem to

have diminished in size and influence since Oslo. Moreover, the Oslo Accords do not obviate the desire on the part of Labour as well as Likud to stymie Palestinian development, to annex most of the West Bank and, above all, neither to give back settlements nor to concede any Palestinian rights in Jerusalem. In that city, the deputy mayor, Shmuel Meir, is on record as planning to "devour Arab East Jerusalem and reduce its Arab community to an insignificant minority." The plan includes demolishing more Palestinian houses, building more settlements, stripping more Palestinians from Jerusalem of their identity and residence permits. Not for nothing did Oslo — neither recognise Palestinian self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian state, nor foresee and plan for anything but continued Israeli domination and sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza.

A great deal has been made by Copenhagen and peace process enthusiasts of people like Yossi Beilin, who is routinely considered to be a dove and something of an ally of the Palestinians. Having myself heard Mr Beilin last year in Washington defend the Qana massacre, I am somewhat less convinced, but it is true that he has had cordial dealings with Palestinian leaders like Abu Mazen. The two of them produced a "secret" document on the final settlement supposedly acceptable to both sides. Not only was the document leaked everywhere, but Beilin made a similar agreement with a Likud Knesset member in which it was decreed that there would be no uprooting of settlements (which will be annexed by Israel), no return to the 1967 borders, no Palestinian state (but only a demilitarised "entity"), and that the Jordan Valley will remain an Israeli security zone. He put it quite plainly in *Ha'aretz* on 28 March 1997: we will have a "demilitarised Palestinian entity, with limited sovereignty, in return for a whole and undivided Jerusalem." He said even more at a televised round-table on 17 March 1997: "I am in favour of building everywhere in Jerusalem, including the building of Har Homa. Since this is our right, the question is one of timing and clever tactics. We [the Rabin government] increased settlements by 50 per cent, we built in Judea and Samaria, but we did it quietly and with wisdom. You [the Netanyahu government] proclaim your intentions every morning, frighten the Palestinians and transform the topic of Jerusalem as the unified capital of Israel — a matter which all Israelis agreed upon — into a subject of world-wide debate. The main thing is to get the Palestinians to agree that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. Without their agreeing to this, there will be no agreement." (Quotes from Tikva Honing-Parnass, *News from Within*, April 1997).

With so reliable and honest an ally, Arabs have very little to worry about: the Israeli peace camp is lined up and ready to march with us! What bothers one about Arab commentators and intellectuals who support Copenhagen and the peace process is why they never confront people like Beilin and Kimche with public questions about their real attitudes. After one

Soapbox

Cultural overhaul

Globalism has destroyed the fallacy of subjectivism. A new era of unprecedented exchange heralds a voluntary transition from nationalism to globalism.

Economics have gained prominence over culture under the hegemony of the "haves" and the "conflict of civilisations". This could pose a threat to Arab culture and civilisation.

Our national heritage has not been capitalised upon to foster Egypt's cultural role. This can only take place by establishing a relationship between heritage and politics. Egypt's role in education and enlightenment has diminished, while that of other nations has advanced. We still believe, however, that by virtue of our civilisation and heritage, we have the final say in all that pertains to Arab culture.

Egypt, however, can resume its leading role. Al-Azhar must resume its traditional cultural and educational functions. We should seek to develop our intellectual abilities and promote systematic thinking. These are the intellectual tools with which to address the challenges of the coming century. The degradation of Egypt's educational system will not be addressed by limited reforms. We should consider the scientific revival of Egypt's educational role.

Egyptian identity is multifaceted: its many aspects may serve to form links with various cultural entities. Arab culture may be adapted to serve political goals. Political leaders with different or even conflicting views within the unity of Arab culture are the sign of a healthy society.

Accommodating differences, accepting the "other" and responding to change without renouncing basic principles are the very essence of a living culture.

This week's Soapbox speaker is Egypt's ambassador to Austria and permanent representative to the United Nations in Geneva.



Mustafa El-Fiqi

hundred years of unbroken Israeli-Zionist hostility to the native Palestinians, and fifty years of mostly successful attempts to destroy their corporate social and political existence, dispossess them of their land, reduce their actuality to that of blacks under apartheid or native American Indians on reservations — with the active collaboration of an incompetent, discredited, and totally corrupt Palestinian leadership — one would have expected a little more scepticism from Messrs El-Kholi and company than the stream of insult and abuse directed against honest Arab critics of Israel and the peace process. Why do Mr El-Kholi and his friends not direct their energies toward trying to change Zionism, especially since, at present, they show very little knowledge of either Israel or the Zionist movement? Why this unseemly enthusiasm for peace with an ideological state that has shown very little inclination, if at all, to concede either on matters of doctrine or on the ground?

The other major issue in the post-Copenhagen debate has concerned an entity obscurely referred to as "the Arab mind", as if one could speak responsibly of so vast, not to say superegoically general an object with any degree of sense. So let us begin by saying that, by attacking the Arab mind in so racist a way, accusing it of derangement and simple "madness", the pro-peace, pro-US Arab commentators, mostly expatriate former leftists, contribute only to the general demoralisation that has overtaken Arab political and social discourse. For them, being moderate is being opportunistic. Very little is said about the policy either of Israel or the US, while a great deal that is defamatory is said about individuals whose views are taken to be retrograde, unmodern, and basically stupid. In a typical piece of transparently illogical rhetoric, one of them accused Arab intellectuals of not having a new enough style of the kind of thought that is required to think about peace; even Palestinians, he says, think too much about the wrongs done them and not enough about the future. Or some such drivel. As if one could separate the past from the future, particularly when one is dealing with an opponent whose whole *raison d'être* is a realisation of the Old Testament, which is nothing if not a style of thought rooted, indeed frozen in the past. So completely has this individual intellectual separated himself from the past that, in 1991, in a prominent American journal of opinion, he advocated an American invasion of Baghdad and the military occupation of Iraq by the US military. If this is an example of new futuristic thinking, one would be right in dismissing it as a fraud, and seeing in it only the old complexes of people for whom the White Man's power is to be worshipped, fawned upon, and emulated at all costs.

Clearly we need more, not less debate in the Arab world. But we cannot accept as debate and free expression of opinion anything that is coercive, and has the authority of official thinking to enforce its claims. The real burden has to be put back aggressively on Israel, to require of its citizens and intellectuals a qualitative change from a political ideology that has never deviated from extreme chauvinism and downright aggression against Arabs, both Palestinian and non-Palestinian. Unfortunately, however, the real tragedy is that, in the Arab world, we have neither the social and political institutions to carry on an open debate with equals, nor the unity and sense of purpose to confront a ruthless, and ruthlessly single-minded, opponent. Until we do, the distorted claims and counter-claims that have emanated in the aftermath of the Copenhagen meeting and declaration will probably continue with no effect at all on the Israeli advance towards the total appropriation of Palestine.

To The Editor

Put the Weekly on the Internet

Sir- My family and I have become faithful readers of *Al-Ahram Weekly* — an excellent political publication that is unmatched in Egypt. This view, incidentally, is also shared by the foreign community living in Egypt. Some of our friends, who have left the country, have asked us to send them a copy on a regular basis as they wished to remain abreast of the events here. The *Weekly*'s layout is attractive; its headlines catchy without being presumptuous; its contents varied; the choice of news items, articles, views and comments, judicious and balanced. Since it is also written in perfect English, it is a most pleasant and interesting paper to read. Moreover, given that it accurately reflects this society's on-going political dialogue, without attempting to impose the "official" line, the reader is left to decide for himself. Having said that, I feel it my duty to propose that you substantially widen

The *Weekly*'s circle of readers — especially those non-Egyptians living beyond our borders and who neither know of the paper's existence, nor its evident value. The way to do this is through the Internet, where Egypt's presence, unforgivably, remains marginal. Among the foreign publications that can be read without charge on the Internet are *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and *Time Magazine*, to name a few. As far as I know, the only Egyptian publications on the Internet are *Egypt Today* and *The Egyptian Gazette*. Confronted with this, I ask you: why is *Al-Ahram Weekly*, which I would definitely put on par with foreign publications, missing from this list? By taking this small, but all important, step, *Al-Ahram Organisation* would greatly contribute to enhancing the Egypt's international image, as well as that of its printed media. Ambassador Omar Sirry Cairo

In defence of music

Sir- Umm Salahadin, in her letter to the Editor (*Ahram Weekly*, 27 March-2 April) makes a case against music, and tells us that "strong derision" of it is found in the *Hadith*, as well as in the Old Testament. Without backing up her assertions with references, she also mentions "a long-standing fear and loathing" that does not include music and dancing among its folk arts. This was the case in 7th century Arabia. The Prophet Mohamed himself enjoyed music. On one occasion, as a group of singers and dancers were performing in his courtyard, he prevented Abu Bakr from sending them away. He even joined his family in watching them, and was seen to beat the rhythm with his foot. Al-Shaymaa, who shared the same wet

nurse as the Prophet, was a reputed singer. The eminent Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Mustafa Abdel-Razeq, made no secret of his admiration and enjoyment of Umm Kulthum's singing. The Qur'an itself contains no mention of music, let alone derision or loathing. Let me remind Umm Salahadin that services in churches and synagogues are partly sung and the organ is played in church. In recent times, religious music gave rise to some of the most popular American genres, the spiritual and blues. In Islam, the call to prayer and reading of the Qur'an are chanted, and the "tun-askeek" are indeed religious songs. Classical music has its earliest sources in the church and some of the world's most sublime music was inspired by Christianity. Medieval molets, Bach's Passions, Handel's Messiah, Haydn's masses, and Mozart's Requiem are but a few examples. Composers were sponsored by princes, but often also by high prelates of the church. Blaming an art form for its abuse

or misuse by some misguided or badly-intentioned few, is like blaming the air for the pollution particles that harm our health. Djenane Ahmad Kamil 57/A Road 13, Maadi Cairo

Blameless music

Sir- I'm writing in response to Umm Salahadin's letter "Blaming music" (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 27 March-2 April). The writer claimed that "strong derision" of music is found in the Old Testament. I wonder where she had got such an idea. I dare say this allegation is unsubstantiated and can be easily refuted by so many Biblical verses. In Psalms 33:2, we read, "Praise the Lord with the lyre, make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! Sing to him a new song, play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts." Many other examples can be easily cited by the reader of the Old Testament. Moreover, recent research has proved that music can be effectively

used in treating certain kinds of physical and psychological diseases. I do believe that some of us have no ear for music and try hard to convince ourselves that it is music which is to blame. Surprisingly enough, it has been proven recently that certain kinds of plants respond to music in one way or another and some agricultural researchers are even probing the possibility of using music with the aim of increasing crop productivity!! Does it make any sense that, as the twentieth century draws to a close, there are still people demanding that music be prohibited and think of it as though it were a great sin? Essam Hanna Waiba Salam Language School, Assiut

Editor's announcement: *Al-Ahram Weekly* will shortly have a site on the Internet. Meanwhile, please make use of our e-mail address: weekly@ahram.org.eg

YOUSSEF CHAHINE: Al-Masrah (Destiny), entered in the main competition at Cannes, the world's major film festival which opens this week, stars Samir El-Sherif as the lead. The film's 15 May screening at the festival will be the first time it will be attended by Chahine and most of the cast, will be the film's world premiere, with Egyptian audiences having to wait until 18 August before Al-Masrah goes on general release.



No "stink of dirt and drink"

If your taste inclines towards the post-modernist art with its thick ambiguities, disconcerting stylistic shifts and ironic twists, then Eva Maria Lerchenberg-Thony's interpretation of *Woyzeck*, which opened at El-Hanager 26 April, would not be exactly your cup of tea. Her choreographic composition of Buchner's piece (1836), though it occasionally makes use of some of the vocabulary of postmodernist dance, remains closely allied to classical modernist dance in its integral unity and coherence and its striving to express what Martha Graham called "the inner landscapes" and achieve what Susan Langer described as "significant form". There is no trace here (as there were none in her two previous works seen in Cairo: *Stargate* and *Geometries*) of any attempt to baffle the viewers, obstruct or subvert their interpretation of the meaning of what they see, or check their emotional involvement in it. No conflicting perspectives here, paradoxical readings, and not a hint of irony or a whiff of parody or humour.

In the interest of dramatic lucidity and force, Lerchenberg-Thony has boldly sacrificed both the thematic density and total complexity of Buchner's text and concentrated, almost exclusively, on the eternal triangle at the heart of the play. *Woyzeck*, his mistress Marie, and her lover, the drum-major, are whisked out of their sordid, bestial and grotesque social milieu and projected as elemental forces, archetypes, or pure passions, locked in con-

Eva Maria Lerchenberg-Thony's dance version of Georg Buchner's *Woyzeck* at El-Hanager could have done with a touch of the sordid, writes **Nehad Selaiha**

flit on a cosmic stage. Even the minor characters are generalised out of recognition and recreated as one big hostile force. This policy resulted in a marked and interesting shift of dramatic focus, making Marie, rather than Woyzeck, the gravitational centre of the performance.

Whether Lerchenberg-Thony meant it or not, this shift of focus had exciting feminist implications. It was as if she had decided to go against the traditional reading of the text and project it from the point of view of the female victim. What engages our emotions here and provides the most stirring and erotic dance sequences is Marie's moral dilemma as she is torn between her overpowering sexual passion for one man and her loyalty and duty to another. In one eloquent sequence she tries to walk out on her husband to follow her lover, but the husband, sprawled on the floor, holds on to her ankles, pinning her to her place; with great effort she frees one foot and lunges forward, but then freezes for a second, panting, looks back, bends down to embrace the husband between her legs while he assumes a foetal position. Indeed, the foetal position was the hallmark of *Woyzeck* in this production and signalled to the audience not only his helplessness and pathetic weakness,

but also his dual dependence on Marie as both lover and mother. Was there a hint of oedipal fixation here? In Buchner's text Marie has a little son, but here the choreography unites the husband and the son into one figure and the relationship between the three members of the triangle gains in complexity and so does Marie's moral conflict.

But inquisitoring as such a feminist reading of the play may be, one cannot help regretting the simplification and omission it entailed. One missed the earthy realism of the world Buchner portrays, his deliciously grotesque caricatures and many vivid vignettes. In Lerchenberg-Thony's scheme of things there was no place for anything coarse or sordid, obscene or vulgar, and in this rarefied atmosphere one could hardly imagine Buchner's drunken "ap-prentice" singing out loud in the tavern, in scene 12: "I'm wearing someone else's shirt! My soul's a stink of dirt and drink!" or delivering a farcical, blasphemous parody of a sermon and winding it up with four-letter words. Nor could one imagine Marie admiring the drum-major for being "tired as an ox" with a beard like a lion, and hear the major retorting: "We'll start a stink for little drum-majors".

In this production the three main

characters, Woyzeck (Ahmed Abdel-Aziz), Marie (Reem Hegab), and the drum-major (Mohamed Shafiq) looked beautiful, graceful, ethereal and thoroughly romantic, while the minimalist set (a bare stage with just a white screen at the back), the frugal, unobtrusive lighting effects, and Judith Wegner's simple black and white costumes, with a tiny splash of red, placed them in a neutral, formalised, ahistorical context.

A degree of simplification is perhaps inevitable in adapting any literary text, and particularly one as rich as *Woyzeck*, to the medium of dance and movement — even when the artist achieves a perfect correspondence between music and movement as Lerchenberg-Thony does here. But here, the simplification went too far, and I could not help wondering if this was not, perhaps, the result of working on a tiny budget with a group which consists mostly of amateurs, with little or no previous training or experience in dance theatre. The production was the result of two one-month workshops conducted over two successive years, and judging by the performance of the dancers in general, and that of Reem Hegab in particular, one cannot but congratulate Lerchenberg-Thony on the remarkable success of her project. She has achieved a great deal in a very short time and ought to be proud of her students and of the valuable work she has done in and for Egypt. In return, she has gained not only our respect and gratitude, but also our deep affection.

Music

Moonlight and whispers

David Blake learns faith, hope and charity



From left: Reda El-Wakil and Nevine Allouba rehearsing; director Abdallah Saad

Le Nozze di Figaro (An Arabic): Cairo Opera Company; Cairo Opera House; conductor, Ivan Fylov; director, Abdallah Saad; Cairo Opera House, Main Hall, 2 May

This production opens with a splendid, expansive set, the palace of Count Almaviva near Seville, supposedly late eighteenth century rococo though it looks more baroque than anything. It is supposed to be Figaro's bedroom. The space is more than large and seems to resemble a forest rather than a servant's bedroom. But opera being opera, the audience can accept this since the forest is probably a tapestry. He and his future wife Susanna are making up the bed. With any luck, Figaro will soon be married, though with the libretto Da Ponte writes you will need more than luck to have a successful marriage.

On stage beds are tremendous symbols. Life and death, and anything between that can happen to a human being takes place in bed. As hard-working theatre-goers of the late twentieth century, with a bed bag on centre stage we know what's coming. But the new producer at the opera, Abdallah Saad, twists the well-worn banalities of the story so that some surprises are to come. Before Figaro can put this nuptial ornament to its rightful purpose we travel through four hours of music, almost Mozart's longest work. The going, despite of his genius, can be a hard listen — Wagner's *Meistersinger* sounds shorter. But Abdallah Saad's production lives out the usual trivialities and the music moves at a quick pace.

Anyway this opera is not really the story of Figaro, it is the picture of an age, one which toppled over backwards into the abattoirs of 1789 and by so doing brings the eighteenth century into a blood stained end. Blood on the broad-clothed surface and charm of the music.

Central to the human scene is the story of the crack up of the marriage of Count Almaviva, owner of the palazzo in which it all takes place. He has a wife, an ironic beauty who knows all about his extramarital lifestyle but loves him still. Beauty and the beast, and what a beast is Almaviva. After interminable twists

which the music sifts over the complicated tale of Figaro, it ends in the moonlight, silver, polished and shining. Who could possibly smudge the end and look beneath the dazzling surface. Mozart did, but not as sharply as Da Ponte. And Abdallah Saad did. Above all things the Cairo Opera needs him, a producer who can clean up the dramatic and visual side of the repertoire. The four changes of scene in this Figaro move silently and rapidly into each other without fuss. There are no waits as the usual seismic rumblings announce the change of scene.

The Cairo Opera stage is a beauty — the Viennese production of *Così fan Tutti* revealed its scope and power of audience contact. This production presents a spacious, lived in area, real people inhabited with things — step-ladders, garden tools and clothing — left lying around. Not exactly untidy but pleasantly lived in. The lighting throughout is subtle and active, not just spots on people. Each scene has its particular aura, ending in a garden scene worthy of any "big house" production. Moonlight and whispers, shadows and ghosts, and old civilised place where even the border plants have sharp tongues.

The costumes, as usual with the Cairo Opera, are beautifully tailored and apt. Even the chorus looked like people attached to the play and not elevated hour hired hands. Mozart, however heavenly, always has plenty of things which bite the unwary performer, singers, orchestra and conductor. Every-

thing must be brisk to survive. In this production the Cairo Opera Orchestra has a tough job.

The entire music world is supposed to know that this score is perfection. Hours long, it melts effortlessly from scene to scene supported by its machinery and the craftsmanship of a demon. Solo, duet, trio, on to quaterns and then a few more voices plus choruses and insipid of all this the fabric stays clear and admissible. It can be seen through, and that's the trouble. In the early days of "joli Mozart" opera stars thought they took nights off Puccini and Wagner, the basic stuff of their careers, to sing a few hours of Figaro. Amadeus became a bore. Mahler put a stop to all this, brought in these producers, singing actors and conductors who thought more of the work in hand than their sticks.

By the nineties Mozart has gone the whole path into sing-theatre. The ladies are in their underclothes or nothing and the work moves out of any definite society into snuff and sleaze. The result is just any old musical, but the reaction has begun and that is about the position of the Cairo Opera Figaro. It has no sex mock-up, or a genteel evening at the opera, but a real story attached to music which, if treated tactfully, can withstand the four long hours.

The second act, which exposes the people of the story as a tawdry crowd, was the musical height of the show. Ivan Fylov brought it off, and so did the singers. The count is a bastard. Reda El-Wakil has the

voice and dramatic thrust for a thrusting part. He also has something else — a fatal quality of tenderness which, covering as it does the instincts of a hyena, presents this subject as a royal beast. His seduction of Susanna was first rate operatic singing. He never just sang alone. The countess was Nevine Allouba and she puts the word with the music. Aided by the production, her countess was beautiful and poised as should be to fit her music. But she almost danced the character. This production centered on her feelings and the elaborate trick of put down the play during the final moments of the opera to bring about the submission and apology of her husband. The dramatic handling of the "letter scene" was natural and unaffected. She was businesslike, no grande dame sitting in a chair in argumentative mood. She gave out the words of the letter with a purpose. It was no fun. She wanted to keep her husband, jungle prowler or no, and she suggested that she loved him, but will probably pay him back with his own tactics at a later date. The countess holds the plot to the end when Mozart finally drops the disguise of the clown, and Rosina comes into her own with real feeling, warmth and tolerance.

Tahya Shamseddin sang Susanna. She has a pure, clear voice and strong technique. She acts well and looks seductively witty. Mozart was chilly about his operatic women but Allouba and Shamseddin at least showed his misogyny out of the eighteenth century and put it into a more tolerant twentieth.

Rauf Zeidan sang an articulate Figaro. He was a complex figure, more executive than servant. He never strutted or ogled, he had his own quality and a way of alighting his body and listening patiently to what was being said. He was a man of a certain station. "Serf" barks the count at him. "No," came Zeidan's look, "better than you". He had power in reserve and a great deal in a very short time and ought to be proud of her students and of the valuable work she has done in and for Egypt. In return, she has gained not only our respect and gratitude, but also our deep affection.

Cherubino introduced Hani El-Gundi. Cupid, Cupid or some sort of god of mischief with ancestors going back to pagan times, El-Gundi is a remarkable figure on stage. Towering, tall, a perfect Latin profile, high-mannered with a melting mezzo soprano voice. What can an opera house do with her? Give her bag rules, as the bewigged grandmother with bawling at the snake? There are roles for her and Cherubino is one of them but the transvestite style was more or less bypassed. Cherubino remained firmly feminine.

Maybe here we should face the Arabic language problem in European opera. Arabic spoken in life can sound explosive enough, but the same words used to accompany European classical music seem to disappear. Maybe *Tosca* in Arabic would sound better. But Mozart, Bellini, Bizet's *Carmina* and Verdi fit nothing but themselves. As the composers of these particular operas have all written, think first of the word and the rest will follow. This rather leaves Arabic on a shelf and non-active in the opera house. Cherubino does not belong to any tradition at all in the Arabic world, so El-Gundi, for all her artistry and looks, was left moonstruck, in the same place as the language. The Arabic sound seemed to cast the vocal line into a whisper.

A few years ago the Arabic *Don Giovanni* sounded well but for the quick fire chatter of Figaro it really seemed to slow everything down and the vocal line disappeared.

As the hours passed, the thought came, how popular is Figaro. It has the brand name of Mozart. It travels well even to Japan. It is almost operatic soap despite of the distinction of its creator. But do people love it as they do *Tosca*? Is it necessary to love Figaro anymore? It has become faith, hope and charity, and it's no way worrying about it any longer.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Islamic Shrine (Paintings)
Egyptian Gallery, 1 El-Sherif St.
Downtown, Tel 393 1699, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm; Fri 2pm-9pm, Until 5 May.
New works under the title *Interspace*.

Al-Ahram Artists Collective Exhibition
Al-Ahram Bldg, Main Hall, El-Ghiza St, Downtown, Tel 5786104000, Daily 10am-5pm, Until the end of the month.
Works by Mohamed Hamed, Nagwa El-Azabi, Nagwa Kamel and Mohamed El-Nasr.

Ann Porter
Sany Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, Mohamed Mahmoud St, Tel 357 5434, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 6 May.
Photographs of his paintings.

John Fennery
Sany Gallery, as above, 12 May-5 June.
Architectural photographs.

Group Exhibition
Cairo Atelier, 3 Faris El-Dawla St, Downtown, Tel 574 6730, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 9 May.
Works by Mohamed Hamed, Nagwa El-Azabi, Nagwa Kamel and Mohamed El-Nasr.

Mohamed El-Nasr
Sany Gallery, as above, 12 May-5 June.
Architectural photographs.

Madaya El-Mahmoudy (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Nasr El-Nasr (Wooden Sculptures)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

The Architecture of Old Cairo
French Cultural Centre, Mohamed Anwar St, Downtown, Tel 357 7679, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 11 May.

Salem (Oil on Paper)
Al-Ahram Bldg, Main Hall, El-Ghiza St, Downtown, Tel 5786104000, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 11 May.

Works under the title "On Music and Sound"
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Ramona Della Chiesa (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Karl Friedrich (Photographs)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Paul El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

EXHIBITIONS

Islamic Shrine (Paintings)
Egyptian Gallery, 1 El-Sherif St.
Downtown, Tel 393 1699, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm; Fri 2pm-9pm, Until 5 May.
New works under the title *Interspace*.

Al-Ahram Artists Collective Exhibition
Al-Ahram Bldg, Main Hall, El-Ghiza St, Downtown, Tel 5786104000, Daily 10am-5pm, Until the end of the month.
Works by Mohamed Hamed, Nagwa El-Azabi, Nagwa Kamel and Mohamed El-Nasr.

Ann Porter
Sany Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, Mohamed Mahmoud St, Tel 357 5434, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 6 May.
Photographs of his paintings.

John Fennery
Sany Gallery, as above, 12 May-5 June.
Architectural photographs.

Group Exhibition
Cairo Atelier, 3 Faris El-Dawla St, Downtown, Tel 574 6730, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 9 May.
Works by Mohamed Hamed, Nagwa El-Azabi, Nagwa Kamel and Mohamed El-Nasr.

Mohamed El-Nasr
Sany Gallery, as above, 12 May-5 June.
Architectural photographs.

Madaya El-Mahmoudy (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Nasr El-Nasr (Wooden Sculptures)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

The Architecture of Old Cairo
French Cultural Centre, Mohamed Anwar St, Downtown, Tel 357 7679, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 11 May.

Salem (Oil on Paper)
Al-Ahram Bldg, Main Hall, El-Ghiza St, Downtown, Tel 5786104000, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 11 May.

Works under the title "On Music and Sound"
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Ramona Della Chiesa (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Karl Friedrich (Photographs)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Paul El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

EXHIBITIONS

Islamic Shrine (Paintings)
Egyptian Gallery, 1 El-Sherif St.
Downtown, Tel 393 1699, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm; Fri 2pm-9pm, Until 5 May.
New works under the title *Interspace*.

Al-Ahram Artists Collective Exhibition
Al-Ahram Bldg, Main Hall, El-Ghiza St, Downtown, Tel 5786104000, Daily 10am-5pm, Until the end of the month.
Works by Mohamed Hamed, Nagwa El-Azabi, Nagwa Kamel and Mohamed El-Nasr.

Ann Porter
Sany Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, Mohamed Mahmoud St, Tel 357 5434, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 6 May.
Photographs of his paintings.

John Fennery
Sany Gallery, as above, 12 May-5 June.
Architectural photographs.

Group Exhibition
Cairo Atelier, 3 Faris El-Dawla St, Downtown, Tel 574 6730, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 9 May.
Works by Mohamed Hamed, Nagwa El-Azabi, Nagwa Kamel and Mohamed El-Nasr.

Mohamed El-Nasr
Sany Gallery, as above, 12 May-5 June.
Architectural photographs.

Madaya El-Mahmoudy (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Nasr El-Nasr (Wooden Sculptures)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

The Architecture of Old Cairo
French Cultural Centre, Mohamed Anwar St, Downtown, Tel 357 7679, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 11 May.

Salem (Oil on Paper)
Al-Ahram Bldg, Main Hall, El-Ghiza St, Downtown, Tel 5786104000, Daily 10am-5pm & 6pm-9pm, Until 11 May.

Works under the title "On Music and Sound"
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Ramona Della Chiesa (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Karl Friedrich (Photographs)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Paul El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

Yusuf El-Nasr (Paintings)
Kareem Gallery, as above, 14-31 May.

By next year, Egypt may have its own gender studies programme at the American University in Cairo. Feminist academics and activists from across the globe gathered for a regional workshop on gender studies to exchange ideas about what it should and shouldn't be. Mariz Tadros attended



Different sisters

Don't turn the page in disgust. Ironically, feminism in the West — long touted as the birthplace of the women's movement — is now getting something of a bad name. Are you a feminist? Yes, but... In some ways, Arab women's rights activists are steps ahead. The workshop on gender studies was no exercise in man-baiting, male-bashing rhetoric conducted by a group of embittered, neurotic women suffering from an inferiority complex. Nor does this Western stereotype have much credence in Egypt. Although Egypt has historically been a pioneer in feminist struggles and ideology, it has no academic programme in which feminism, gender and women's issues are studied on a regional level. It is, however, an exception. Such programmes exist in Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, Yemen, and at Birzeit University in the West Bank. The list goes on.

Studying women in the Middle East has raised much controversy. While Western feminists are grappling with the dilemma of difference and diversity within feminism, many Arab feminists both inside and outside the region are debating whether they should "borrow" from Western feminist thought or, rather, develop their own indigenous feminist product. If they opt for the latter, there is still a major issue to be settled: just what is indigenous feminism, and what, if anything, will it resemble?

Sandra Hale, at the gender studies department at the University of California, Los Angeles, argues that it is precisely the dichotomy between "Western" and "Eastern" feminism that has perpetuated the stereotyping of women from both spheres. Western programmes, for instance, are allegedly more concerned with sexuality, and are more woman-centered, entrenched in an ideology of "liberation pedagogy", while their counterparts in the Middle East are thought to be "community" or "society-oriented", hardly concerned with sexuality and not too thrilled about the Western touchy-feely approach to academia. Hale argues that Western feminism's relationship with women in the region has been particularly problematic because not only have they had to deconstruct the Orientalist and colonialist discourses on Arabs as the "other", but also to deconstruct the "other within" — namely, women in the Middle East.

All those who attended the workshop criticised the West (including many Western feminists) for the widespread "hysteria over female genital mutilation", as well as the continued focus on reproductive rights, as if

these were the only issues affecting Arab women. Should feminists from the region "rejoice" that some of the taboo issues are finally being addressed openly, albeit as a part of a Western political agenda, or should they downplay the gravity of some of these issues in order to give space for other, equally pressing, problems? No consensus was reached.

To shift from the Western feminists' depiction of women as victims of "sexual slavery" in the Middle East, Hale suggests that useful gender studies' approaches should position women as actors, as agents of change within the wider political economy, rather than merely passive receivers and victims. The victim approach, she affirms, has commonly characterised some international agencies' approaches to women in development. She argues that the initiation of so many domestic-oriented income-generating projects for Sudanese women, "only put women and their productive and reproductive labour at the service of the state and of international capital".

Alternatively, Hala Afshar, an Iranian feminist and the founder and director of the Women's Studies Centre at York University in the United Kingdom, argues that she has relied extensively upon personal narratives from women attending the course since their voices have been subsumed or obliterated altogether from traditional history. "What we know is that women have been invisible in all the grand theories and this is why oral history is so important, especially in the Middle Eastern context", she said.

Soheir Morsy, an Egyptian feminist and the director of the gender studies programme at Tufts University in the US, disagrees. "There is always a danger in reducing scholarship to the personal level. It is one thing to talk about feminism in terms of the 'personal is political' — but the political must be theorised, socialised and historicised, not simply be presented as 'this is my personal experience and I'd like to share it'." Or, as one director of a women's studies centre wrote: "A woman's maturation experience does not end at a syllabus make." Morsy contested that women's low rates of participation and appreciation in sciences must be addressed, and a feminist perspective must be interdisciplinary to cover not just the humanities but the sciences as well.

Victim feminism — the excessive emphasis on patriarchy in feminist studies — is drawing much criticism. "For one thing, it homogenises women in opposition to men, rather than con-

textualising them in broader socio-political and global power relations. Besides, women's position alters according to their life cycle, power ranges from when you are a young mother to when you are a mother-in-law," said one participant in exasperation.

So to what extent can women in the Middle East look to the West in their struggle for emancipation and empowerment? Some attendants expressed the struggle they face or fear when collaborating with the West: If they criticise manifestations of gender discrimination in their own societies (or, as one attendant asked, "air our dirty linen abroad?"), they are obliged to emphasise or "illustrate" their authenticity or "national/regional" allegiances so as not to be regarded as traitors.

This is especially problematic when it comes to looking for funds for the establishment of gender studies in the Middle East. Many NGOs and centres involved in advocacy work rely entirely on foreign funding, which has raised suspicions that donors can restrict or orient the agendas of women's rights groups.

Concern was voiced, moreover, that many independent international NGOs as well as international development agencies, expect their own agendas to be tied to funds. "It is not coincidental that increasing interest in women's issues coincides with the depoliticising, de-radicalising and domesticating of the syllabus. Still, we cannot survive as a centre without foreign money," said Lisa Taraki, a Palestinian feminist from Birzeit University.

But foreign funding is not the only sensitive issue. If feminists in the Middle East use material on women written by Western feminists, should that be regarded as a cultural import? "It is important not to assume that what happens in the West happens in different contexts in the Middle East, but we are an Arab society which has been part of a regional civilisation in which we influenced others and vice-versa. So part of what we are importing is our one-time export to the West," suggested Morsy.

The gender studies programmes offered at Birzeit and Sanaa universities have shown that reliance on Western feminist methodology and empirical findings on Middle Eastern women has been problematic, for practical reasons. Because the greater part of the available material on women in the region is in English, the Unit for Social Research and Women's Studies at Sanaa University made it a pre-requisite for all students to show high levels of proficiency in the language. Women's studies programmes in Sanaa as well as Birzeit have been con-

fronted with the daunting task of translating material from English to Arabic as well as "Arabising" concepts common in Western feminist discourse.

The same debate over cultural specificity extends to another issue of central importance to the gender studies agenda in the Middle East: the relationship between Islamic fundamentalism, nationalism and feminism. The Palestinian as well as the Algerian experiences have protested against the authorities' abandonment of promises made to women once independence was gained. Eileen Kunab's paper on the Palestinian women's experience stressed growing gender disparities after the Oslo agreements, especially in employment opportunities.

Bouthaina Chetoui, an Algerian feminist, decried the expectation that women should be the embodiment of a tradition delineated by local patriarchal beliefs. Not only are Algerian women today experiencing the forces of state-sponsored paternalistic feminism, they are also confronted with a backlash waged by the fundamentalist movement.

In contrast, Hala Afshar suggested that Islamic feminists in Iran and feminists in the West share a common underlying agenda: "Islamic feminists in Iran argued that the world was rejected make-up, they were both political decisions." Objecting to generalisations about all Islamic feminist women in the Middle East on the basis of the Iranian experience were expressed by some attendants, however.

The recommendations made for an adequate gender studies programme in Egypt are expansive; celebrating global sisterhood while recognising differences, exalting feminism while resisting individualism, promoting dialogue between East and West while preserving "an indigenous character", and incorporating men without losing the feminist focus: these are but a few.



The notebook

When we married, I moved to Alexandria, into the flat my husband had shared with his mother for over thirty years. It never occurred to me that I could have asked for an apartment of my own. Generally, I had been brought up to have few demands, which suited my new husband fine, since he was not exactly the type who showered his loved ones with expensive little baubles at the slightest provocation. He was not really tight with his money, he used to say, just careful.

I was therefore quite surprised when, a few days after our wedding, he announced mysteriously that he had a gift for me. It was a good thing I did not expect shining gilded decorations that would have made my friends green with envy. The present was a worn-out notebook which had belonged to his mother. Knowing my husband's great love and respect for his mother, who had just died, I opened the little booklet with the required reverence. It was divided into several sections and basically spelled out the way she went about her household chores. "I want you to follow her system," my husband whispered lovingly.

Before our marriage, I had made no secret about my utter dislike for domesticity. I could not stand and had no desire to learn. I held the belief that houses are places where one spends as little time as possible, not shrines in which household gods are adored. I had proved it, after all, by complying with his desire that his apartment remain exactly as his mother had arranged it. I had refrained from any comment about what I secretly considered its tackiness, but now I felt that my husband was trying to manipulate me into doing exactly what I had said I would not do.

"I'll start looking for a job tomorrow," I said quietly. He argued that, in his family, women did not work, that they all looked after their families. Why, his aunt had refused to get married in order to care for her bachelor brother and, now that he had died, she still lived in the big house and invited the whole family over for lovely Sunday lunches.

I had met his old aunt and had loved her dearly. And her lunches were really delicious. "She is living alone now," I pointed out. "Why don't you ask her to move in with us? I'll go to work and she can make *lababa* for you every day."

Unfortunately, the aunt had come to love her freedom after all these years of staying to keep her brother happy. She agreed, however, to spend a couple of days with us. If her favourite nephew was in trouble, she was not one to turn a deaf ear to his cry for help.

She was a tiny woman with a twinkle in her pale blue eyes. She had hardly arrived when my husband began pouring his heart out to her. I was surprised by the importance he attached to household comforts. There was no doubt in my mind that his mother had spoiled him. I kept this observation to myself, however. I did not think it was my place to criticise my husband's mother, who was also the aunt's sister.

The aunt, meanwhile, was listening with a smile. "You'd rather work than look after the house?" she asked mildly. I nodded. "Come with me, we will make a nice cup of tea. I've brought your husband's favourite cake." I followed her reluctantly to the kitchen. She looked carefully around, then called my husband. "She can't work in this kitchen," she announced. "It needs total remodelling, a new refrigerator, a modern stove, you should change the floor tiles and have kitchen cupboards built in from top to bottom. Have everything painted a bright yellow, it is a happy colour, it will put her in a good mood." I looked at her. She was not smiling, but her eyes were dancing with mischief. "Mother liked it this way," said my husband sulkily. "She did not need bright yellow to cook the most delicious meals."

"Your mother's cooking was appalling, the whole family always said so, with all due respect for my dear sister, of course," said the aunt. We went through the house. She found fault with everything. The bathroom was below standards, we needed new tiles on the floor, new fixtures and fittings, lots of built-in cupboards; the three bedrooms had to be completely repainted, the furniture changed and, while he was at it, she said, why not sell the old-fashioned dining room and buy a modern round table with a few chairs?

Another good idea that had just occurred to her was to open the wall between the kitchen and the dining room and make the two rooms into one huge family room where we could cook and entertain at the same time... There were windows that had to be enlarged and balconies that would benefit from being enclosed. Had Jaccuzis been invented in those days, I am sure she would have advised him to install one.

She went on and on, enthusiastically describing what we could do to the flat, disregarding the restraining hand my husband had firmly placed on her arm. "I am sure that your wife will love doing housework in such surroundings. I might even think of moving in with you, when you are finished with the work," she told my bewildered husband, nudging him coyly.

I did not think that giggling at this point was in good taste, but I had a hard time watching my husband's face and restraining myself. "Do you know how much this will cost?" he finally blurted out, looking indignantly at the little old woman. She eyed him innocently. "You did not ask me to solve your financial problems," she said quietly. "All you said was that I had to convince your wife to get on with her household chores; this is what I have been doing." She patted me affectionately.

"Wouldn't you like a new apartment, dear?" Though I didn't really care one way or the other, I nodded vigorously. "Now, if you have financial problems," she continued sweetly, looking at my husband, "why not let her go to work?"

A few days later, when I told my husband that I had found a job, he did not object.

Fayza Hassan

Sufra Dayma

Libyan macaroni

Ingredients:

One chicken cut in 8 parts
300g macaroni (ring shaped)
One onion (diced)
One tsp. crushed garlic
3 large tomatoes (diced)
One pod green chili (finely chopped)
2 tbsp. tomato paste
Butter + salt + pepper + allspice + cinnamon

Method:

In a cooking pan, melt the butter and fry golden the onion, then add the garlic and then the chicken parts. Stir fry until golden, then add the green chili, the diced tomatoes, the tomato paste and the spices. Stir and add two cups of water, bring to a boil, then simmer over low heat and leave to cook until the chicken parts are almost cooked. Uncover, add three more cups of boiling water, bring to a boil, then add the macaroni and leave it to cook, covered over a low heat. Stir the mixture gently and serve hot with a rich green salad.

P.S.: This dish can be cooked with veal or beef cutlets instead of the chicken.

Moushira Abdel-malek

Restaurant review

The absent onion

Nigel Ryan discovers how to halve disappointment

Discreetly, without fanfare, Cairo lost its Swiss Air restaurants. Suddenly there was no more Air. They became simply Swiss Restaurants, and though the staff and interiors of the chain remain pretty much unchanged there has been a certain revamping of the menu, which seemed always to rely a little too heavily on bits of veal in cream sauces that usually featured mushrooms. Time, then, to revisit.

La Chesa is the chain's downtown branch. Not much has changed inside, though the restaurant now boasts a small annex. The staff are pretty much the same. It still has fretted pine chairs with hearts cut out of the back, cow bells hanging from the ceiling, sketchy, pine-framed prints of scribbled chalets on the walls. The only place where you notice the change is in the menu, which is both more extensive and attempts to add a little variety by including regional dishes from Switzerland's Italian-speaking enclave.

One of the most pleasant things about La Chesa is its salad bar. Things here remain pretty much the same, a variety of marinated and fresh ingredients, changing according to season. You simply help yourself, and pay according to the size of plate. We decided on small salads, followed by apert macaroni and spaghetti ticiene.

For the jaded restaurant reviewer, menus that include long lists of ingredients in the description of dishes are a god-send since one can account for a goodly proportion of the required copy simply by repeating ingredients. For the restaurateur, however,

they are something of a bind. Imagine, you have your new, expensively printed menu, with detailed descriptions of everything you serve, down to dressed garnishes. And then, for some reason, you run out of "tender minced veal". But one of your customers has just ordered spaghetti ticiene, and the menu states quite clearly that this is what is included. What do you do? Well, at La Chesa, they simply cut up an escalope into bite-size pieces and stir it into the pasta.

I chose apert macaroni simply because the long list of ingredients intrigued — potatoes and pasta, with smoked veal, in a cream-based sauce, with crisp onion rings and apple compote. Curiously, which never did for cats, is equally not the forte of the faint-hearted. I ordered.

Initial disappointment — no crispy onion rings, no compote — was halved with the arrival of the latter, slices of poached apple in a small earthenware dish.

Heavy food, and in quantity. Neither of us finished our allotted pasta dishes. The salads, though, were excellent, with a particularly fine mixture of marinated cauliflower and finely chopped peppers. It may not sound inspired but it was. Together with two fruit juices, the bill came to just under LE70. The orange juice, incidentally, was blood red and utterly delicious. Service is as friendly as ever, and no one could ever fault those Swiss-trained smiles.

La Chesa, 21, Adli Street, Downtown. Tel 393 9360

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

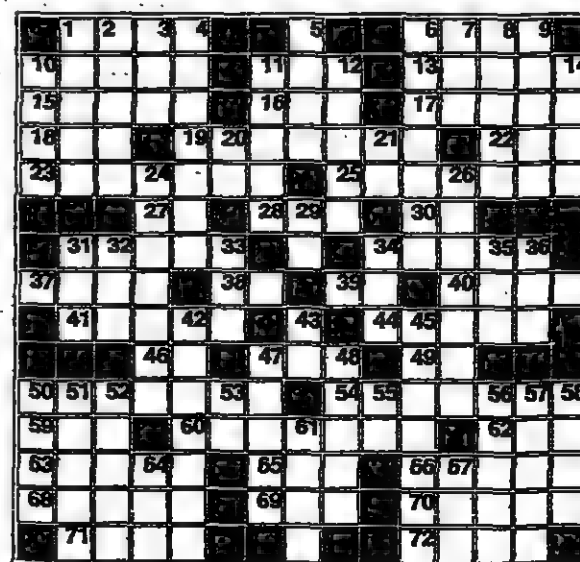
Across

1. French military cap (4)
6. Make headway (4)
10. Quarrelsome woman; also for (5)
11. Calumniator (3)
13. Symbol for peace (5)
15. Lifeless (5)
16. Bulgarian monetary unit (3)
17. Was examined again after failing (5)
18. Title of respect (3)
19. Incident (7)
22. Room in a haven (3)
23. Peace-making (7)
25. Small falcon (7)
27. Similar (2)
28. Cereal used in bread making and fodder (3)
30. Symbol for "cobalt" (2)
31. Cloth cap (5)
34. Alas! load (5)
37. Some (4)
38. Over (2)
39. Negation (2)

Down

1. Pepide formed in blood after injury and causing sensations of pain (5)
2. Put to use; bring into play (5)
3. Through (3)
4. Grave; ardent; poignant (7)
5. Makes (4)
6. Moorish (7)
7. Spanish cheer (3)
8. Shield protecting eyes from sun (5)
9. Sidestep (5)
40. Parlour or kitchen (4)
41. Stare angrily; brilliance (5)
44. Overweight (5)
46. Sun God (2)
47. Baldness (3)
48. Prep. of location (2)
50. Dialect of East End (7)
54. Splash with mud or slander (7)
58. Miss Gardner (3)
60. Plant producers (7)
62. Scandinavian monetary unit (3)
63. Job (5)
65. Equality (3)
66. The Tempter (5)
68. Wheat meal; soft powder from farinaceous roots (5)
69. Elevated trains (3)
70. Throw out (5)
71. Certain medical specialists; abbr. (4)
72. Rotunda (4)

Last week's solution



10. Gripping instrument (4)
11. Pilot (5)
12. Arouse; call up spirit from the dead (5)
14. And others, L. 2 wds (4)
20. Symbol for "platinum" (2)
21. Prefix indicating "reversal" (2)
24. Identify; characteristic (7)
26. Outpouring; rapids (7)
29. Old form of "you" (2)
31. Quagmire (3)
32. Slipper fish (3)
33. Lower extremity (3)
34. Court; serenade (3)
35. Part of L.A. (3)
36. Deer (3)
42. Footstap (7)
43. Us (2)
45. Predisposed (7)
47. Short-sighted person (5)
48. Employers (5)
50. Baby elephant or whale (4)
51. Unfertilised ovum (5)
52. Statue (5)
53. Expression of hesitation (9)
55. Symbol for "radioactivity" (2)
56. Effigy (5)
57. Obliterate (5)
58. Live in temporarily (9)
61. 40 Across divider (4)
64. Desecry by fire internal fittings of house; extract essence of book (3)
67. Past (3)

An entire culture is under threat in a village associated with the art of Hassan Fathy and Shadi Abdel-Salam. Nawal Hassan pleads for the life of El-Gourna.



A village's right to live

El-Gourna, the village on the west bank of Luxor, is in danger of disappearing forever. The Antiquities Department seeks to turn the area into an open-air museum and empty it of its population. El-Gourna is a vibrant community, rich in cultural heritage which attracts visitors for the beauty of its vernacular adobe (mud-brick) architecture. Its magnificent landscape, the abundance of artisan activity which takes place in homes and in the village streets, the traditional daily activities, and the hospitality of its people. Visitors walking up the village paths leading to the Tombs of the Nobles are attracted, as if by a magnet, to the living. They delight in seeing the activities of this farming and artisan community which makes their visit to the monuments doubly interesting. As they pass the children coming back from school or the women on their doorsteps embroidering cotton scarves or sewing out the local sun-bread, or *ush alhami*, in trays in their courtyard, or the artisan polishing statues of the deities in the side streets, or the boys winding their way up the steep paths on the cliffs with their barrels of water carried on donkey-drawn carts, the culture of Ancient Egypt becomes vibrant and meaningful to them. It is the Gournawi living traditions that make this entry possible into the glorious history of Ancient Egypt. What a tragic mistake would it be to think that tourists are only interested in tombs and temples.

Egyptians as well as tourists can appreciate that the beauty of the landscape and monuments is enhanced by the presence of the indigenous population who are the retainers of the genuine customs, beliefs, folklore, and identity of the place.

The village is an integral part of Egypt's history, old as well as new. Although the inhabitants make their mundane living from selling handicrafts to tourists today, it was the Gournawis who, in the late 19th century, discovered a cache of royal mummies in a cave in their hills. This was how the Pharaonic treasures came to light.

Artistic revival: Old and new El-Gourna have been immortalised forever in Shadi Abdel Salam's classic film *Al-Mumia* (The Night of Counting the Years) and in Architect Hassan Fathy's book: *Gourna, A Tale of Two Villages*.

It was Fathy who pioneered ideas of building with local materials and methods. His work earned him 12 international awards including the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and the Louis Sullivan Award, given by the International Union for Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers, which created the Hassan Fathy Institute in Rome.

But years of neglect followed since Fathy's time and El-Gourna suffered the encroachment of new buildings. The Ministry of Education pulled down the original school and built a concrete building and the police added its own station. However, Hassan

Fathy's El-Gourna is still visited by admirers of his architecture from all over the world.

The idea of turning this village into a centre for learning about vernacular architecture and village development is still alive. Local as well as foreign theatrical groups hope to utilise the theatre and help repair El-Gourna and build its community centres.

Old and new El-Gourna are very much alive, tied together in cultural symbiosis. Numerous professors and students of architecture from Cairo and Ain Shams Universities, the School of Fine Arts and foreign universities have come to study Hassan Fathy's legacy and sketch the gentle architecture of the houses of old El-Gourna.

From 1945 to 1967, the Ministry of Culture provided scholarships for teachers of fine arts and their students to spend two months painting the landscape, villages, and the bas-reliefs and paintings in the tombs and temples. Many Egyptian well-known painters participated in this experience: Tahia Halim, Salah Taber, Effat Nagui, Ingi Aflatoun, Gaziya Siry and before them, Mohamed Nagui, a great painter whose works are still on display in his little-known museum behind Luxor's Movenpick Hotel on the desert road.

The venue for such creative experience was Sheikh Ali's mud-brick hotel in old El-Gourna, which accommodated the original Chicago House, one of the first archaeological centres to be established in El-Gourna.

Sheikh Ali, the grand old man of El-Gourna, was renowned for his hospitality. He built a *marzouq*, or art studio for artists in the courtyard of his hotel, then added a wing for archaeologists.

Since the owner's regretted demise, it is no longer possible to get a beer at Sheikh Ali's, but the terrace-courtyard still affords the most beautiful view

of the Nile's west bank, with the green fields and colossal of Memnon gracing the background and the lovely houses decorated with paintings of the *hajj* straddling up the village's cliffs.

The idea of reviving the *marzouq* was taken up some years ago by an American woman artist who hoped to bring American and European artists to El-Gourna to work with Egyptian artists and students. The venue has had its moments of glory. Royalties were shared and dined there, including Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan and Prince Henrik of Denmark.

Recently, students from Antioch University attended a whole course on Ancient Egyptian history and art given by the late Dr. Abdel-Aziz Sadeq and his wife, the Egyptologist Cynthia Shikhulliam.

Uncertain future: El-Gourna currently faces the threat of irreversible transformation. Current plans call for the entire population to be evacuated from a total of 1,500 houses and moved to new villages that were originally built for flood victims in 1993.

Later on, all hotels and houses situated on the road separating the agricultural fields from the mountains will be turned into offices and rest houses for the Tourist Police, the Antiquities Department and other government agencies.

The operation has already started in a low-key, step-by-step approach. Some 250 families were moved to new homes. Their houses were destroyed by bulldozers and pickaxes, leaving behind a mound of broken bricks and dust. This is a sad scene. Dust from the adobe bricks flies about, settling on passing tourists and shop displays.

When the bulldozer was first used, the locals were rightly indignant. They had been denied the use of

such heavy equipment when they needed to carve paths into the mountain. It was quickly realised that the bulldozers were doing damage to neighbouring houses and tombs. Since then they have been replaced with teams of men wielding pickaxes.

How do El-Gourna's inhabitants feel about all that? According to a recent survey, most families feel a strong bond to their homes, which belonged to their parents and grandparents, and are willing to put up with the primitive conditions and restrictions on expansion. Most families depend for their livelihood on tourism. Some own shops. Others work in alabaster workshops, carving statues, lamps, boxes and objects d'art from marble and other stones. Scores sell various goods to tourists, from fly whisks to head gear and other handicrafts. Women embroider scarves and shawls and fashion sequined dolls which their daughters sell to tourists.

A few specialised craftsmen carve beautiful replicas of bas-relief from the tombs of Ramose and Nakht. Weavers make simple kelmis from wool. All these people will lose their income when they are moved to new villages situated 10 kilometres away. The government plans to open shops on the main road leading to the antiquity sites. Such shops will not benefit the poorer freelance artisans and may actually attract tourists who are already over-exposed to stop and shop tour guides.

Perhaps only those El-Gourna villagers who are engaged in the formal sector in hotels and restaurants on the east bank of Luxor will not be harmed by these plans. Those working in hotels and cafeterias on the west bank will lose their jobs.

The future of the operators of traditional sailing boats, or feluccas, and ferries is also uncertain.

With the introduction of electricity in the 1960s, the Gournawis were suddenly launched into the 20th century. The graceful silhouette of women bearing water jugs disappeared and was replaced with water barrels hauled on donkey-drawn carts. This access to large quantities of water suddenly became a problem. The Antiquities Department does not allow piped water or drainage cisterns for fear of leakage and damage to the tombs. Piped water, the Gournawis are quick to point out, is only available for foreign archaeological missions and Local Council members.

In the absence of a sewage system, refuse water is dumped onto the streets or into empty crevices. Yes, water and drainage is a problem. Yet for every problem there are solutions which can be found, short of moving out an entire community. Alternative scenarios can be studied.

Various donor countries are currently engaged in the design and construction of large scale water and sewage projects all over Egypt.

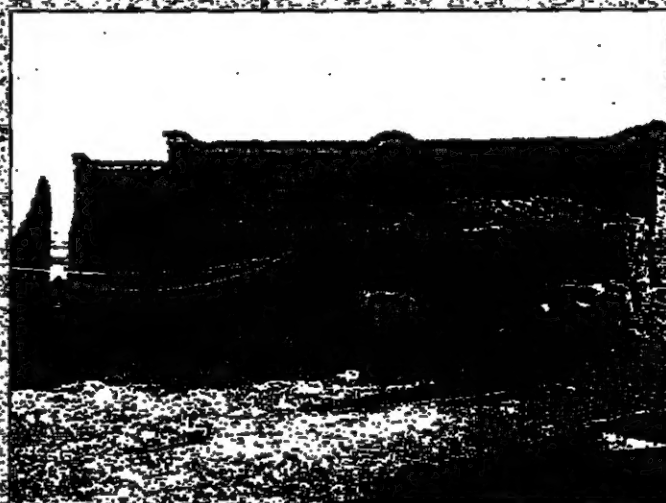
For instance, the Danish government is undertaking a project in Esna to install a waste water and sanitation system at a cost of LE126 million. It is certainly worthwhile to conduct a feasibility study to examine ways of preventing waste water from damaging the tombs.

No price can be too high for the protection of our antiquities and heritage. El-Gourna deserves to live.

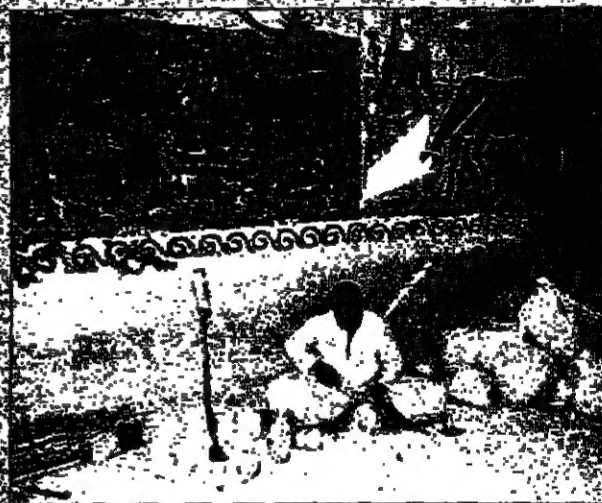
The writer is president of the Association for the Urban Development of Luxor, director of the Centre for Egyptian Civilization Studies and a former member of the Committee of Folk Art of the Higher Council of Culture.



Artists' friends: Sheikh Ali and his sister, by Effat Nagui.



On beautiful by the west: A village scene.



Enhanced livelihood: Artisan carving alabaster vase.

A marvel of marble

Beni Suef is developing a marble cave for tourism, but whistle-blowers suspect foul play. Fatemah Farag reports

That Beni Suef has marble is no news. The quiet, Upper Egypt governorate has marble to spare. Streaked but glorious, cold but true, quarries and truckloads of it.

What most of us, including Beni Suef inhabitants, do not know is that the governorate has a Marble Cave — Kahf of Wadi Sanour — which is the third largest in the Middle East, surpassed only by the caves of Gaetia and Qaderia in Lebanon. "What?" and "who?" were among the answers received by *Al-Ahram Weekly* when trying to find the whereabouts of the Kahf.

The site was discovered in 1992 by accident. Miners digging for marble exploded a rock and walked into natural history: A marble cave, 50 metres underground, complete with stalagmites and stalactites (upward and downward protrusions, respectively).

Authorities informed, official expedi-

tions were arranged and the location was declared a protected area.

For a while, newspapers hailed the discovery and public figures visited the site. Eventually, the public interest died down and the cave seemed set to reclaim its former state of subterranean obscurity. This, however, was not to be.

A Beni Suef resident, Ennadeddin Zeid, filed a lawsuit against the Beni Suef Governorate and a contractor, Hajj Rashidi Aswa, claiming that the governorate has allowed the contractor to damage the cave and haul away marble illegally.

Hard to find: Accessible only via a 50 km trail of sand and rock, the cave is unreachable except by sturdy trucks or four-wheel drive vehicles.

Riad Abdel-Karim, a geography student from the village of Sanour, visited the area and was impressed: "The cave is real-

ly marvelous, with huge stalagmites and stalactites which are a light shade of yellow and almost transparent. Theyinkle like crystal if you tap on them." According to an information sheet provided by the Beni Suef Governorate, "the cave is 30 million years old, oval-shaped, and covers an area of approximately 500 square metres."

For all its hidden beauty, the cave does not lend itself easily to inspection. "It is very dangerous. In fact, I went there with my professor to see if a school trip could be arranged and we decided against it," says Abdel-Karim, who enumerated other problems: the bumpy car ride of four or five hours, the hazardous wooden steps that take you steeply down into the cave and the lack of light inside.

"Most people in the area have never heard of the cave because it is so difficult to get there," adds Abdel-Karim wishfully. Following the cave's discovery, the

Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) contracted Hajj Aswa to clear the cave's entrance of jutting rock, improve accessibility to the area, and, generally, prepare the site for its new role as a tourist attraction.

According to officials, the contractor performed these tasks admirably. General Abdel-Meguid Ahmed, head of the Beni Suef Quarries Project says Aswa has done an "excellent job" which includes the establishment of a "very nice rest house with air-conditioning."

Abdel-Karim also liked the work done by the contractor. "The Hajj has done a great job. He had to dig 80 metres deep so that cars can drive down to the entrance."

Voices of dissent: Critics of the work include Karam Saber, of the Al-Ard Human Rights Centre, which handles the case

against the Governorate and the contractor. "We first heard about the case when three guards who were dismissed from the project came and talked to us. They said that the explosions carried out at the lower part of the cave damaged certain areas..."

They reported this to the governorate on 31 October 1995. The case was referred to the public prosecutor. The latter has not yet announced the findings of investigations. The guards were dismissed on 1 January 1996.

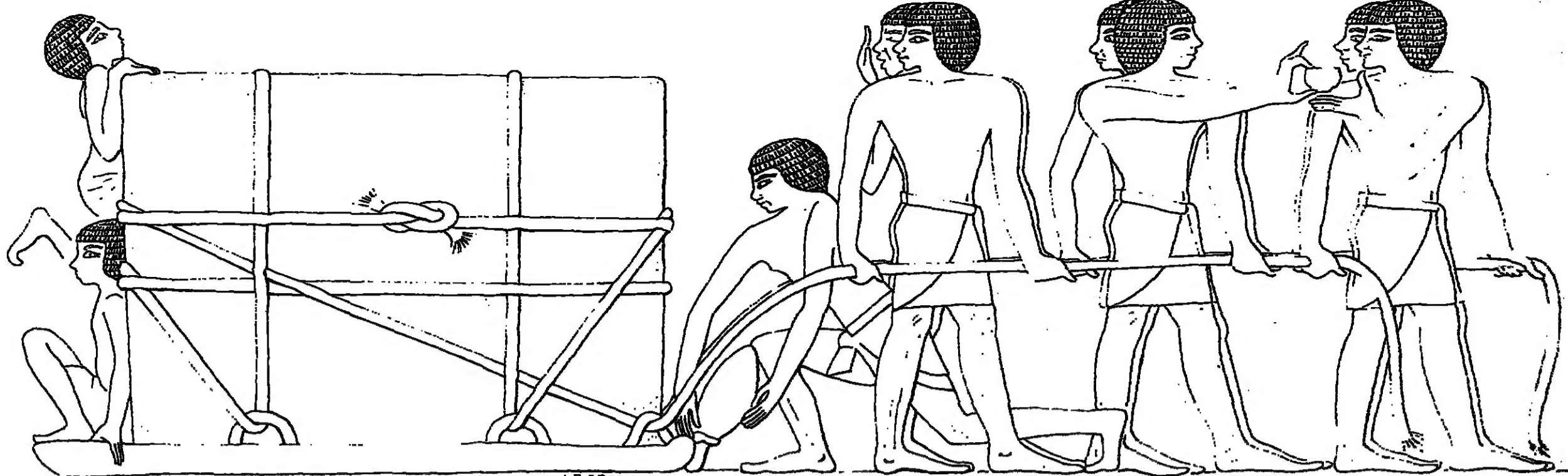
Saber points out that the use of explosives was not allowed by the contract between the EEAA and Hajj Aswa. "The contract specifically prohibits any action which may result in damage to the area. He adds that 35 workers were wounded during the clearing of the site and are taking legal action through the Al-Ard Centre."

Saber claims that the contractor has

made millions by removing marble from the cave under the guise of cleaning the area. "We checked the files at the toll station at the beginning of the road and have reason to believe that he was taking up to 1,000 tons of marble out of the area per day. Multiply that by LE 250 per ton — the going price for marble — to see how much he made." Work in the site stopped since the Al-Ard initiated legal action in February this year.

General Ahmed says that according to Aswa's contract with the EEAA, the contractor is entitled to remove the marble dug up in the process of cleaning in compensation for his efforts.

Beni Suef Governorate officials were reluctant to take sides. "We have a limited budget for Beni Suef and we are building a new city which has priority for our money," said Heba Abdel-Karim from the governorate's Investment Services Office.



Who really built the Pyramids?

The recent upsurge of public interest in pyramid-building is underlined by a spate of new books on the market. **Lyla Pinch Brock** looks at the issues and the authors, and remarks on *The Ancient Egyptians: Life in the Old Kingdom*, the contribution of *Al-Ahram Weekly's* Jill Kamil

Sought by sages and seers, hushed by Italian archaeologist Belzoni, raped, repaired, lit and looted — the Pyramids of Egypt have survived thousands of years of interest and abuse. They mesmerised the Greek historian Herodotus, made Napoleon feel small and provoked the curiosity of the ninth century Caliph Al-Ma'mun to such an extent that he broke in. Perhaps because of their bland and un-revealing exterior, the Pyramids are believed by some to contain the secrets of the universe.

In recent years the Pyramids have attracted as much attention from mystics, quasi-religious groups and publicity-seekers as bona fide scientists, and, as a result, various nefarious claims have been made about their builders, age and construction.

This trend peaked last week when Zahi Hawass, director of the Pyramids Plateau, was asked to participate in a televised debate with two authors who insisted that the monuments were built several thousand years earlier than the scientifically-established dates. The programme followed hard on the heels of a number of documentaries, books and articles exploiting such claims.

It revived the age-old questions, who built the Pyramids and how? These questions have been treated by the popular media with mixed results. In the film *StarGate* (named in Egypt) gravely-voiced women from outer space assume responsibility. Author Mohamed Samir Atta (*The Amazing Surprise in Solving the Mystery of Egyptian Pyramids*) confidently confirms it was the People of Aad. The theory of foreign slave labour, instigated by Herodotus and promulgated by such films as *Moses*, keeps popping up. After all, they say, how could such marvels be built by mere Egyptians?

In the midst of all this madness, a little blue book seems like a cool pool of reason and logic. Jill Kamil's *The Ancient Egyptians: Life in the Old Kingdom*. Kamil probes at the roots of a culture which reached its epitome with the Pyramid and comes up with theories on the creation of cults, the importance of festivals, and the significance of ancestor worship. Much of this is derived from 40

years' observations and experiences living in Egypt, much of it as writer and researcher on Egyptological subjects.

Kamil explores every aspect of Egyptian life from propaganda to board-games, titillating us with glimpses of Pharaonic entertainment preferences.

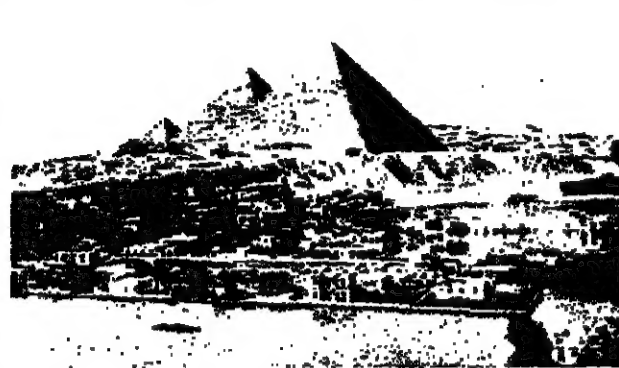
By tracing the growth of Egyptian society from hunters and gatherers to the stage of ultimate achievement, the book provides the student or general reader with a clear insight into Egypt's ancient past.

Book editors say that the public thirst for mummies and pyramids is never quenched. This summer a spate of new and re-issued books on Egypt's Golden Age will attempt to satisfy popular and scholarly audiences by presenting the results of recent archaeological work combined with new photographs and historical reconstructions.

Most of the authors treat the question of who built the Pyramids evasively, ignoring the Egyptians' reputed superior mathematical ability (recognised world-wide), and the fact that slavery at this time is not well-attested in Egypt. While foreign participation cannot be completely ruled out, the Czech Institute's excavations at Abusir last year discovered a relief showing Egyptians towing a pyramidion (with not a whip nor a foreigner in sight), which would seem to confirm that the Egyptians themselves were the builders.

How the Pyramids were built remains a puzzle. Experiments by Egyptologist Mark Lehner (author of the forthcoming *The Complete Pyramids*) and a Japanese mission proved independently that the two and a half-ton blocks could be manipulated using simple methods and few men. But how were they raised into tiers?

During a recent talk at the American Research Centre in Cairo, Lehner admitted re-thinking his theory of a wrap-around ramp. Dieter Arnold, an Austrian archaeologist working at Lisht, south of Cairo, pointed out it would be possible to take accurate levels with such a device installed. Yet, obviously, a straight ramp would be impossibly long and steep.



An artist's view of the transportation of limestone blocks by Egyptians



The last of the "great floods" in 1932 caused urban expansion and put an end to the picturesque boulevard that took turn-of-the-century travellers across agricultural land to the plateau. Below is a scene of current excavations of a bread, and related beer, facility that served the workers

And as for why they were built, the idea of pyramid-building as a "make-work" project to fill the gap between sowing and harvesting, (the core of Kurt Mendelson's book, *The Riddle of the Pyramids*) may be passé. New information suggests construction probably continued year-round. This and other related ideas about pyramid-building are explored by Kamil in her book.

Over the last 10 years there has been a flurry of archaeological activity on the Giza Plateau. The discovery of a new "satellite" pyramid at Giza by Hawass; the German Archaeological Institute's report of a controversial "door" in the Great Pyramid (possibly a built-over air vent?); the plumbing of another lost-pit by a Japanese Mission (contents unrecovered); the restoration of the Sphinx by the Supreme Council of Antiquities under Hawass, who has also directed excavations in the Western Cemetery and the tombs of the pyramid-builders (dating to the time of Menkaure, builder of the Third Pyramid).

During the installation of a new sewer system in Nazlet El-Simman in Giza, blocks from a causeway were found, and, although not preserved, they at

least added to the architectural history of the Pyramids. Lehner has been working with Hawass and others clearing a site below the Sphinx where beer and bread-making took place.

The Ancient Egyptians: Life in the Old Kingdom, which has been substantially revised since it was first published in 1984, is guidebookish and small enough to stuff in a back-pack. Subjects are easily accessed under chapter headings, diagrams are clear and helpful. Charming line drawings by Elizabeth Rodenbeck liven the 196 pages along with little blips of Ancient Egyptian literature and colour photos since the book's centre.

Yet Life in the Old Kingdom is really a sociological study, examining the impetus for the development of a high civilization at a time when most other cultures were still stuck in the Stone Age. The Egyptians themselves realised that this period, from 3,000-2,145BC, was perhaps the greatest in Egypt's history. The canons of art and architecture were established, craft industries burgeoned, trade flourished, medicine and writing developed, religion and burial practices evolved into elaborate rites. There

was an urge for law, order and education as part of a "good society".

Little changed during the ensuing millennium. The pyramid-builders, although almost as remote to the people of the New Kingdom as Julius Caesar is to us, symbolised endurance. They put pyramids above their tombs at Deir El-Medina on the Theban necropolis by choosing the natural formation (the "Gum") as the backdrop for the royal necropolis. As historian Cyril Aldred wrote, "In later years the Egyptians looked back upon the Old Kingdom as a Golden Age, in which superhuman deeds were done by wise men for mighty kings. In particular, they instinctively recognised the art of its monuments as the true and characteristic utterance of the Egyptian psyche, and they returned to it again and again as a source of inspiration and a point of departure, even in times when different conditions prevailed."

The Ancient Egyptians: Life in the Old Kingdom, by Jill Kamil is available from the American University in Cairo Bookstore and all major bookshops in Egypt. LE60.

EGYPT AIR

Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:

Abn Simbel Sales Office:	324836-324735
Alexandria Office: Rank:	4833357-4828778
Green:	5865461-5865434
Airport Office:	4218464-4227888-4282837-4281983
Aswan Office:	3150001/2/3/4
Airport Office:	498387-498588
Assiut Office:	332151-322711-324000-323487
Mansoura Office:	363978-363733
Hurgada Office:	443591/4
Airport Office:	442883-443597
Ismailia Office:	328937-221950-221951/2-328936
Luxor Office:	384580/1/2/3/4
Airport Office:	384567/8
Luxor Office Karnak:	382360
Marsa Matruh Office:	934398
Menoufia Office (Sheik El Koni):	233302-233523-233522
New Valley Office:	883901/95
Port Said Office:	224125-222670-222921
Port Said Office Karnak:	238333-239970
Sharm El Sheikh Office:	604514-604489
Airport Office:	604488
Taba Office:	408530014-530011
Direct:	5783620
Tanta Office:	3117503/1/789
Zakazik Office:	349829-349830/1



Piece of the month: Fertility goddess ushers in spring

TAWERET, the goddess of fertility and protection who assisted mothers in childbirth, is the special display at the Egyptian Museum during the period 15 April-15 May. Nevine El-Aref reports.

After a three-month break when the Greco-Roman goddess Aphrodite remained on display, Mohamed Gomaa, the interim director general of the museum, said that the practice of drawing public attention to specific items, will be resumed. "If possible, we will treat various themes, such as the theme of maternity and motherhood, in successive months," he said.

The statue of Taweret is a fine green schist piece which shows Taweret as a pregnant hippo with human arms. Her legs are those of a lion and she leans on the 32 sign, an emblem denoting protection. The statue was found at Karnak in a small limestone chamber where wall reliefs show that the High Priest Pabasa dedicated this piece to the consort of the god Amun, daughter of King Psamtik I. The statue was previously on display in the museum among New Kingdom items.

Site tours

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramses Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurgada and Sinai. Tel. 772-603.

Cairo-Alexandria

Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm. from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.

A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE29; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Aswan

Services at 7am departures and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE30.

Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32.

Cairo-Port Said Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; 8am, 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramses Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said Service 6.45am, from Ramses Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurgada

Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurgada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurgada Service 5pm, from Ramses Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurgada 2.30pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company Buses travel to North/South Sinai, Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qalbi (near Ramses Square), Almaza and Tahrir Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbasiya Square. Tel. 483-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qalbi, then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qalbi, then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qalbi, then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbasiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Northern Services 8am, from Abbasiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Company Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurgada Services 8am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safat Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Quessir Services 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor Service 8am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramses Station. Tel. 147 or 375-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan "Frenchie" deluxe trains with sleepers Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE294 for foreigners and LE141 for Egyptians.

"Special" deluxe trains without sleepers Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE53; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria "Tahiti" trains VVIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.

Standard trains: Services 8am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.

"Frenchie" trains Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir. Adly 390-0999; Open 390-2444; or Helios 772-1110

Cairo-Aswan Tickets LE351 for Egyptians, LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip.

round-trip.

Cairo-Luxor Tickets LE259 for Egyptians, LE290 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurgada Tickets LE279 for Egyptians, LE298 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh Tickets LE287 for Egyptians, LE294 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Egyptian tourism on the Internet Have some useful addresses on the Internet, including tourism magazines, archaeological and travel agency programmes:

<http://www.egypt.gov.eg/links.htm> is an address through which you can access other useful tourism addresses on the Internet. Here they are:

<http://www.egypt.gov.eg/tourism> is the address of Egypt's Tourism Net which provides directories of Egypt's hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, travel agents, transportation companies and tourist attractions.

Egypt's tourism net is a part of many home pages (culture, health, environment, etc) created by the IDSC as a part of the nation's information highway.

<http://1163.131.10.41/tourism> is the key to Egypt's Net. It is the address of the Ministry of Tourism, and describes its projects in Egypt.

<http://www.memphis.edu/egypt/egypt.htm> is the address of the University of Memphis, and describes its projects in Egypt.

<http://www.egypt.gov.eg/vic.edu-baggage/travel.html> is the address of Egypt's Tourism Net which provides directories of Egypt's hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, travel agents, transportation companies and tourist attractions.

<http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/7210> is the address of The Cause of the Pyramids. It includes photographs of ancient tombs and temples.

<http://www.egypt.gov.eg/vic.edu-baggage/travel.html> is the address of The Arabian House Worldwide Guide. This guide aims to promote the world's most beautiful and accessible home — the Arabian.

<http://www.egypt.gov.eg/vic.edu-baggage/travel.html> is a 2,000-page magazine, published by the Ministry of Tourism, where all Egyptian tourist areas are listed and described.

<http://www.egypt.gov.eg/vic.edu-baggage/travel.html> is the address of the magazine *Cairo Scene*, Cairo's first on-line art and entertainment guide. It is the most up-to-date source as when to go and what to do in Cairo. It has also sections for books and the latest CD's besides proposed places to visit like Wadi Rayana.

<http://www.egypt.gov.eg/vic.edu-baggage/travel.html> is a daily site covering home news including political, social and cultural events.

Compiled by **Rahab Saad**

مكتبة المتحف

Zambia zapped by Zamalek

In an impressive reversal of fate, Zamalek breezed by Zambia's Mfulira and came one step closer to a fifth African club title. Abeer Anwar reports

Like the *khamsin* storm that hit Cairo on the same day as the match, Zamalek came out of the blue to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat during the African Champions League game last week against Zambia's Mfulira.

Trailing the Zambian team by the end of the first half, 2-1, Zamalek came back in the second with what appeared to be newfound vigour and skill, netting four consecutive goals in the span of roughly 30 minutes and winning the match, 5-2.

While the less-than-stellar performance in the first half of the game was partially due to the strong and quick pace set by the Zambians, Zamalek's disorganised game-plan and the absence of some key veteran players, also contributed to bringing down the team's morale and level of play. Missing from the starting line-up for this key match were players like Ismail Yousef and Ashraf Qassem. As a result, Farouk El-Sayed, the team's new technical manager, was forced to field several inexperienced, yet promising players.

"Although this was an important match, I had no time to try out new strategies," explained El-Sayed. "Realistically, with six of the main players out of action, I had no choice but to field some younger players."

But following the 15 minute half-time break, Zamalek came back with a vengeance, apparently finally able to agree on how to work as a team. While this turn of events was due in part to El-Sayed's pep talk, during which he lambasted the players for having disappointed fans and officials alike with their shoddy performance, it was also a result of two key changes the new manager implemented. First, he pushed veteran midfielder Ahmed El-Kass into an attack position, then he replaced Hussein El-Sayed with Nader El-Sayed in goal. From that point on, it was smooth sailing as Zamalek began dominating the match. The series of goals began with an 8th minute score by Sami El-Shishini and a 9th minute drive home by Ayman Mansour. Later on, in the 26th and 43rd minutes of the second half, Tarek Mustafa and Ahmed El-Kass also found their mark.

With this win under their belts, Zamalek's second leg match against Mfulira, which is set to take place on 18 May in Zambia, could prove to be an easy win for the record four-time winners of this premier African club event. To qualify for the round of eight, Zamalek only needs to draw or, in the worst case scenario, lose the match 0-2. In either case, once having moved up, they seem sure to pocket the \$150,000 purse awarded by the African Football Federation to the team making it to the quarter finals.



Zamalek's Kasi Said trying to score a goal while Mfulira's goal keeper attempts to defend him

photo: Mohamed Wassim

Sailing death

MAKOTO Namba, the first Japanese yachtsman to enter the top 10 in the America's Cup world rankings, is presumed dead more than a month after he was swept into the sea from the helm of his boat, reported The Associated Press.

Namba, who sailed for Japan in the 1992 and 1995 America's Cup trials, was steering the 6.5-ton yacht *Escape One* at night, without a life jacket or tether, when he was hit by a 4-metre (13-foot) wave on 23 April. Namba was involved in Japan's first attempt at the America's Cup in 1987, and crewed on *Nippon*, the 1992 yacht entered by Nippon Challenge, the Japanese America's Cup syndicate.

Japanese Coast Guard officials are still searching for clues or the yachtsman's body.

Stich in time

MICHAEL Stich, the 1991 Wimbledon champion and veteran German Davis Cup player said he will retire at the end of the season because of a worn-out shoulder.

Stich climbed to the world no. 2 ranking in 1994 but subsequently slid down to 26th. Since 1990, he has won 18 singles titles and nine in doubles, including an Olympic gold medal with Boris Becker at the 1992 Barcelona Games. In 1991, Stich defeated Becker in the Wimbledon final and then went on to the 1992 Grand Slam Cup and the 1993 ATP World Championship with a finals victory over Pete Sampras. He has been on the decline, however, since 1994 when he lost the US Open final to Andre Agassi.

Stich stated that he would enter this year's French Open and Wimbledon tournaments before ending his career in Germany's Davis Cup relegation series against Mexico in September.

Soccer surgery

FIVE months after successful heart surgery, Nigeria's Nwankwo Kanu is well enough to resume his soccer career. The 20-year-old Kanu was diagnosed last year with congenital heart disease, and received treatment in the US for the condition in November 1996.

After extensive post-operative testing by doctors at the Cleveland, Ohio hospital in which he was treated, Kanu has been judged to be in better physical shape than before the surgery.

Table tennis drama

PLAYERS and coaches threatened to withdraw from the World Table Tennis Championships in England last weekend because officials refused to find them seats to watch other competitors.

Organisers, who were apparently surprised at the sell-out audiences attracted by the event, turned players away because they had nowhere to seat them. Even Belgium's Jean-Michel Saive, one of the world's leading players and the president of the CTTF, the players union, was turned away. After lengthy protests, the organisers agreed to put in another 300 seats on the floor.

"If the organisers had not done this there would have been a boycott," said Saive.

More US Olympics?

EIGHT US cities have signed up for an Olympic race that might never be held, reported AP. Hoping to lure the Games to the United States for an unprecedented ninth time, officials from the nation's capital to the Pacific Northwest sent applications and non-refundable \$100,000 checks to the US Olympic Committee, which could pick one of them to bid for the 2008 Summer Olympics.

Lining up for the chase — which might last four years and cost up to \$40 million — were Baltimore, Cincinnati, Houston, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, DC.

Prince of pain

"PRINCE" Naseem Hamed lived up to his prediction and stopped fellow Briton Billy Hardy in the first round to retain his IBF and WBO featherweight titles at the Nyanza Arena in Manchester.

Hamed, wrote AP, knocked Hardy down with a right hand midway through the round, breaking the challenger's nose in the process, then immediately put him down again with a left before referee Paul Thomas stopped the fight in 1.25 minutes of the first round.

With this win, the 23-year-old Hamed extended his unbeaten record to 26-0, with 24 of his victories inside the distance. This match was his fifth defence of the WBO title, and the first of the IBF crown he took from American Tom "Boom Boom" Johnson in February. Naseem is now expected to try to unify all four titles.

Davis Cup dreams shattered again

With Tamer El-Sawi missing from action, Egypt fell flat on its face attempting to move into the Davis Cup Group I competition. Nashwa Abdel-Tawab explains why

If winning was the name of the game at last week's Davis Cup qualifier, then Egypt, pitted against an unimpressive Portuguese team, not only missed the main point, but may as well have missed the match entirely.

During the three day Euro-African Group II event, which was held in the Gezira Club, a clearly demoralised Egyptian squad walked away with a string of losses that once again rekindled their hopes of moving into the Group I competition back somewhere in the recesses of their wildest dreams. This defeat, while nothing new for a team that has now lost this event three years in a row, threw the spotlight on just how weak the team is without its star player, Tamer El-Sawi. El-Sawi was conspicuously absent from this year's qualifiers, speculate many, as a result of financial squabbles with the Egyptian Tennis Federation. Filling his shoes this year was a less experienced and skilled Mohamed Ramadan.

Playing a series of four singles and one doubles matches, the Egyptian crew, composed of Amir Ghoneim, Gehad El-Deeb, Adli El-Shafie and Mohamed Ramadan, lost each match, leaving the final standing at Portugal's 5 to Egypt's 0. And, unlike last year's Davis Cup matches, where El-Sawi managed to give England a run for its money on Wimbledon's main court, or the year before, when Egypt held its own until it lost 1-4 to a tradi-

tionally strong Ukrainian team, this year, there were no close calls.

With El-Sawi missing from action, the weaknesses of the Egyptian team were decidedly pronounced. El-Deeb lost his singles match to Nuno Meroles, 0-6, 4-6, 6-7. Ghoneim lost 6-2, 4-6, 6-7, 3-6 and, in the doubles event, an outclassed El-Shafie teamed up with Ghoneim to lose the match, 5-7, 1-6, 0-6 to the Portuguese pair, Emanuel Couto and Bernardo Mota.

Clearly, given this humiliating defeat, three times was not the charm for the Egyptian team. But more importantly, it has raised the question of why its success, or near success, hinges on world ranked no. 170, Tamer El-Sawi. The most obvious answer is that El-Sawi is the most skilled, mainly due to his fan's support. Similarly, his skill and enthusiasm carried over to the other players. What neither he, nor the other team members have received, however, is much support from the federation. In fact, some ETF officials have gone so far as to accuse El-Sawi of staying away from this crucial event because they didn't give him the money he asked for.

El-Sawi, who is gearing up for a confrontation with the ETF next week over precisely this issue, argues that this is not the case. But whether it is or not, it seems that he holds the key, albeit perhaps a psychological one, to the possibility of Egypt moving into the Group I Davis Cup competition.



Zamalek hoop-la

BASKETBALL fever is once again upon the Zamalek Club, whose senior team has enjoyed an unbroken winning streak in both the Egyptian League and Cup games.

Just last week, Zamalek qualified for the Egypt's Cup final, defeating four-year-in-a-row champions Gezira, 73-61 in what proved to be a physical and tough to manage match.

Although Gezira led at the start of the game, Zamalek's playmaker, Ahmed Qasawi, helped bring his team ahead while their fans quickly crossed over from jubilation to ecstatic. Assisting the already strong team in their win were two foreign recruits, Lamin and Soudi, both from Mali.

With another win in the bag, Zamalek will go up against Ahli in the Cup final at the end of May. Ahli, who have held titles at both the Arab and African level, barely managed to squeeze by Alexandria's Itihad, winning the match 73-65. Zamalek is expected to win the match-up against Ahli for the Cup, and is also expected to win the League final next Saturday.



Softening blows for boxers

A recent medical conference on boxing could lead to the introduction of safety measures in a sport long condemned as being too violent

Brain scans costing thousands of dollars could soon become the norm worldwide in professional boxing if the sport's medical experts have their way. Doctors at boxing's first medical congress, held this week in Aruba, issued a list of medical musts, ranging from bans on spectator smoking and 60-day fighting bans for boxers who are knocked out, to mandatory yearly brain scans for professional boxers. But one African orthopaedic surgeon in attendance said the costs involved made many suggestions, "a mission impossible."

Prohibitive costs or not, however, the options are few and far between. World Boxing Commission (WBC) President Jose Sulaiman warned that if the sport cannot be made "safe or safer, then there should not be boxing."

This, despite the efforts of those bent on banning this sport of pugilists, seems to be a remote possibility. "We have to assume that boxing will continue as always, legal or not," said Peter Richards, a British neurosurgeon who is waging a British Medical Association campaign to ban boxing. "So we need to set a standard and ensure good medical care not only for the richest boxer, but especially for the poorest."

One recommendation proposed at the conference would require boxing promoters to help fund research into boxing injuries. The doctors, who came from 83 countries to attend the WBC-sponsored

conference, did not specify who would pay for other tests, such as mandatory brain scans, which cost between \$250 and \$3,000.

Magnetic resonance imaging tests (MRIs), considered the most accurate means of detecting brain damage in boxers, are unavailable in any but the wealthiest countries. Doctors from Africa said fighters on that continent cannot even afford AIDS tests costing \$20 — roughly what they earn for an average professional fight in their country.

Other guidelines, such as barring boxers under the age of 18, and over 35, could also be hard to enforce in the sport which has no overall governing body. The WBC is one of four major world regulatory bodies for professional boxing.

In poorer countries, such as the Côte d'Ivoire, this lack of clear guidelines means that boxers are, "widely exploited and at the mercy of their trainers and managers," said radiologist Gadji Gohorru. While the top boxing prize in this West African country was \$600, fighters have to finance their own medical treatment, he said.

"It's going to be a mission impossible for the investigations and recommendations that are to be carried out," said Godwin Kanu, a Nigerian orthopaedic surgeon and medical advisor to the Nigeria Boxing Board. "I don't see anyone willing to foot the bill."

Kanu said he thought poorer countries

would have to pick and choose among the new guidelines, and suggested promoters be forced to absorb the cost.

Another conference participant disagreed. "What monetary figure can you put on protecting the boxer?" asked Frank Quill, a representative of the Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation. Citing the Philippines as an example of a country which has already implemented some reforms in the sport, he said that President Fidel Ramos recently agreed to have the government sponsor yearly MRI scans for boxers. That promise came after a record 300,000 fans turned out to watch Filipino featherweight champion Luisito Espinoza take on Cesar Soto of Mexico. "They are showing the way to the world," said Quill. If a wealthy country like Australia failed to follow suit, he said, it would "become a laughing stock."

Other recommendations introduced during the four-day conference include: weigh-ins at least 24 hours before the bouts; worldwide screening for HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and C; reducing championship bouts from 12 to eight rounds; banning boxers who are knocked out from sparring for 30 days and from competing for 60 days' extensive medical evaluations for boxers at high risk of brain damage; and a ban on smoking in arenas.

(Report by AP)

Radwan El-Kashef:

He is honest, not only about his own work, but about a lot of other things too. The film he has just finished? "It is an imitation of the film I really wanted to make"



photo: Sherif Sorbal



Scenes from 'Ara' El-Balah, which will be released shortly

The real thing

"We all imitate everything these days; buildings which look like buildings but are not, because they suddenly collapse and, as you know, collapsing is not one of the functions of a real building; books which have the appearance of books insofar as they are collections of printed pages, but are not, because they neither provide knowledge nor, usually, tell the truth," Radwan El-Kashef is on a roll. "Have you noticed what is happening to the food we eat these days?"

Coffee looking like coffee and tasting like dust, tea pretending to be tea but smelling like chemicals, and the round thing that they sell in bakeries disguised as baladi bread? How do you like Egyptian vegetables now that we no longer depend on the floods of the Nile? Bananas have identity crises, and suddenly taste like cucumbers, strawberries grow as large as frogs, our most popular staple food is replaced by unspeakable ersatz. His voice builds to an outraged crescendo. He hovers, smiling amiably, peering at his spellbound listener a little short-sightedly before swooping in for the kill: "We eat lies these days, that is what is happening!"

His most recent film, *Ara' El-Balah* (Date Wine), does not escape this wholesale criticism of everything. "It is similarly tainted. It is a poor imitation of the real *Ara' El-Balah* which I have carried in my mind and of which I have written the script." He wanted to make this film a long time ago, even before *Leih ya Banafeg* (Violets are Blue), which brought him to the attention of the public. He could not find a producer because the film was "different" and nobody wanted to risk money on something that would probably be a box office flop, as he was told by all the producers he had approached at the time.

He did not even have a leading role to peg his film on, they told him, a name which would carry the story and attract the crowds. His hero is a young boy of 16, and, says El-Kashef, he saw no point in giving the role to an older famous actor masquerading as a teenager. Confronted with all these difficulties, he just shelved the project. One

day, the time would be right, he thought.

"I was finally able to do it, thanks to Mariam Khoury, who accepted to produce *Ara' El-Balah*, but I had to compromise even then." Ideally, El-Kashef would have loved to shoot the film in the *Sa'id*. This is where he was born and where he spent five months of every year during his adolescence and young adulthood. His father was the *Umda* of a little village near Sohag. Life in the country was real, says El-Kashef and so were the people. It has changed now, he adds, "too many outside influences", and he does not go back that often anymore.

He can tell you countless stories tied to his village and the Nile floods before the Aswan High Dam was built. The whole life of the village revolved around the yearly miracle, back then. "One morning, the women would warn us that the floods were on their way, and all the children would run to the outskirts of the village to wait for the big wave. Suddenly we would see it coming with a roar, a huge mass of black waters, thundering down towards us. We would run back as fast as we could, screaming that it was coming, terrified that it would catch up with us. Within half an hour the aspect of the village would change entirely, with its fields drowned under the water, its dry streams suddenly gurgling."

During the first two days, everyone stayed indoors, because the floods brought with them a crop of snakes and scorpions, dislodged from their hiding places, and which roamed freely through the village. On the third day, however, the insects and reptiles disappeared and the youngsters would start bathing in the waters, the men and boys during the day, the girls in the evening, watched over and protected from men's eyes by the older women. For three months, the mood of the village would be festive. There was nothing to do except play, dance, cross the waters in little boats to visit relatives and swim in the emerald-green streams. Work in the fields only started when the waters withdrew, around October.

"My life has been shaped by these customs and

by peasants' values and sense of seasons, says El-Kashef with the nostalgia that only a long-time urban dweller can convey. "Have you ever had the chance to hold a clump of earth in your hands after the Nile withdrew? It was black, dripping with the richness of the silt which gave everything we ate its distinctive taste. I am still searching for the smells and tastes of those days. Sometimes, walking in the city, I stop, mesmerised. An odour has tickled my nostrils, a sound has rung in my ears and, suddenly, I am back in my village, in those days."

He had wanted his film to take place in the *Sa'id* "because it is really about the women of my village or other neighbouring villages, when conditions changed and the men left to find work in the cities or, even worse, in the Gulf countries." But the *Sa'id* villages have lost their character, says El-Kashef. "They do not even build their houses like they used to, anymore. They are using reinforced concrete these days." He could not find a village which resembled the location which he had always envisaged for his story, carrying it in his mind over the years. "It would not have felt authentic to shoot it where it really took place," he said, smiling at the paradox.

He shot his film in one of the oases, Dakkha, where the building traditions are still intact and the closest to what he knew in his childhood. El-Kashef is not sorry to have compromised in this case, because nature is "incredibly beautiful and untouched there". This was not imitation, it was the genuine thing, with the houses built to suit the climate and plenty of typical, narrow dark alleyways, which afford natural protection from the scorching sun. And there were real artesian wells, exactly like those used to be near Sohag. "The water tastes so good from these springs," he sighs.

In *Ara' El-Balah*, some strangers come to this village and tell the men stories of faraway places where they can make undreamed-of riches. All the men believe the strangers and follow them, abandoning the village and the women; all except a young boy of 16, who refused to go. The film is about the village deprived of its men, now a wom-

en's place, and of this young boy, the only male left to share their lives."

There are no central characters in the story, no real heroes. Rather, it is the poignant account of the material and moral destruction that emigration can cause within a small community, amputated of half of its population. Soon news filters back from Eldorado and rumours circulate that it is not the heaven the dream-mongers had described, adding to the distress of those left behind.

Anxiety and a sense of doom befalls the inhabitants. The normal, peaceful cycle of rural life has been broken irreparably. The price to pay is dear. Things will never be the same. It does not come as a surprise that El-Kashef finds the idea of emigration utterly distasteful. "I could never leave my country," he says forcefully. "I have my roots firmly planted in the land." But while he has remained faithful, the country itself has been changing. "People don't know the genuine *Sa'id*," he says. "How he used to be in the old days. The men of my village were open-minded, not at all like the stereotypes Cairenes use to describe them or as you often see them on television. My father was elated that I was interested in an artistic career, and he had a lot of respect for the cinema. He insisted, however, that I go to university first. I studied philosophy. Once this was done with, I entered the Cinema Institute. Now I am happy I listened to my father, because I would never have achieved much with what they taught me at the institute."

A good director, a real one, should have vast experience in arts, psychology, literature, science and plastic arts. "These days the institute produces imitation directors," El-Kashef smiles, aware that he has returned once again to his obsession. "I had to shoot in a location that was not the real thing," he explains, "and I had to cut many of the effects that I knew were good because they would have taken too much time. I had to finish work on location in six weeks although I knew that, to do the best possible job, I would have needed ten. All these are compromises which ultimately alter the

nature of what I had really set out to do. This is why I say that I produced the imperfect copy of the film I had dreamed of."

A director in his early forties, El-Kashef has already two good, critically acclaimed, commercially quite successful films to boast about as well as his graduation project, which earned him highest honours. What does the future have in store for him? "I feel that we are on the brink of something really big. Right now, of course, things may look bad for the industry, but directors and producers are slowly starting to wake up. The Gulf market is drying up fast and we are becoming aware of the necessity to look for new outlets. Standards and taste will have to change if we are going to look towards Europe, the countries of the Maghreb and the Fertile Crescent, the US."

"Young directors are becoming more secure in their own worth, and many refuse now to cater to the whims of a famous actor/actress to keep their show going. In the recent past, whole scripts have often been entirely re-written to magnify the role of the star of the moment and ensure the commercial success of indifferent films. Many among us are not interested in such practices. Nor are we interested in selling to video companies or television. Cinema is a separate art and this is the way it has to remain."

Directors and producers have to stand up and speak their minds in defense of their art, El-Kashef insists. Undoubtedly, there are battles that will have to be fought before the circumstances are right to produce the "real" films which are El-Kashef's aim, but he is prepared. Time, he thinks, is on his side. He believes in the immense cultural, social and political influence of cinema on a public "in dire need of upgrading its artistic expectations." El-Kashef considers that "it is our job, and our duty, to teach the public the difference between an enriching artistic production and its commercial imitation, and we are up to the challenge."

Profile by Fayza Hassan

Pack of cards

by Madame Sosostis

Chairman of the Board of Al-Ahram Organisation and editor-in-chief of Al-Ahram, Ibrahim Nassef, opened last Sunday an exhibition featuring the works of Al-Ahram artists which included Makram Hamein, Nagi Kamel, Nagwa

El-Ashri and Mohamed El-Nasser. Among the exhibits was a sculpted portrait of George Belagary done by Nagi. Art exhibitions have become part of Al-Ahram's traditions, and one that is appreciated by a large public interested

in plastic arts as was obvious from the large attendance attracted by the event.

Oh dear, my brains are tingling. I just finished this highly intelligent book *Electronic Computers and the Technology of Communication*, authored by Al-Ahram's Mohamed Taysour Abdel-Hamid and Mahmoud Alim El-Dia both distinguished experts on the matter. Al-Ahram's Chairman Ibrahim Nassef was so impressed by the impeccable timing of the book's publication that he wrote the preface himself. Don't forget dear that we, at Al-Ahram, are what you may call pioneers in the science of communicating electronically.

No sooner had I put down the book than, with figures and bytes dancing before my eyes, I had to slip in my organza body suit and dash to the International Seminars to attend, with *la crème de la crème*, a gala evening organised by the Cai-



ro Rotary. And what a gala this was. Dour had offered two watches from its exclusive 1997 collection to be auctioned and the proceeds given to charity and Brigitte Lefèvre, the Maison Dior's representative in Cairo asked Maxie Makhlouf to conduct the auction, which he did with instantly acquired professional mastery; but would you believe, the successful

bidders asked that their names be withheld. "This is money we are giving to charity, you are not supposed to advertise your good deeds," said... ooops! I shall not tell you who, though let me tell you dear, if I had given that much to charity I would have hired a fiddler to sing my praise on the roof, believe me. Anyway entertainer Gwen Perry who was con-

cooking the event when she was not singing old favorites, was so impressed by Maxie's performance, that she insisted he join her in a duet. After dedicating his song to his lovely wife Mona, Maxie closed his eyes, and he and Gwen crooned *Feelings* to an enraptured audience.

All Near Mohamed, the

التكنولوجيا الإلكترونية وتكنولوجيا الاتصال



Nassef with Nagi to his right and Makram Hamein to his left at Al-Ahram art exhibition; technology of the '90s

former Yemeni president, was invited by writer Mahmoud El-Saadani to an old-fashioned typical Egyptian dinner party at the Kowling, and Sporting Journalists Club, in which the guests sampled trotters, different stews and pickles among other delicacies. El-Saadani's guests included Engineer Ali Wali, former minister of petroleum, Dr Alay El-Dia Hbal, Dean of

the Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, Ibrahim Hegazi, vice-chairman of the Journalists Club and editor-in-chief of *Al-Ahram Al-Riadi* and our own Galal Nasser, member of the board of the club as well as a number of public personalities. El-Saadani entertained his guests with an inexhaustible repertoire of anecdotes for which he is well known.

It is possible to have a deep, meaningful relationship on a weekly basis.

The Economist

For further information call: (02) 3391090
Al-Ahram Est, Al-Galaa Street, Cairo